

**AUGUST 2024**

**“GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY”:  
YOUNG AND ESTABLISHED LEADERS’ PERSPECTIVES OF  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN SPORTS AND RECREATION  
INITIATIVES SERVING CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

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## Summary

Increasingly, researchers, practitioners, participants, governments, funders, and others involved with sport are suggesting that sport is good for children and youth – but only under the right conditions<sup>1</sup>. “Good sport”<sup>2</sup> requires careful consideration and targeted action to ensure participants have positive experiences. Caring adults, particularly those who had positive sport experiences in their childhood, can set the stage for “good sport” to happen for children and youth. One way they can do this is to return to volunteer and/or work with the very organizations that provided them with opportunities in their childhood or youth – what we call “giving back”. In this research project, we prepared reports, presentations, and academic manuscripts that detail the “giving back” experiences of young (aged 17-27) and established (aged 28+) adult leaders who engage in sport leadership roles with three community partners offering programs targeting children and/or youth, namely the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGC Ottawa), la Société des Jeux de l’Acadie (SJA) and the Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC). In each of the three cases, we discussed young and established leaders’ understandings of “community”. Our analyses also focused on the leaders’ motivations for “giving back” and the meanings they gave to their responsibilities, in addition to and beyond sporting fervor, as practices of engagement and commitment to young people and to the “community” (however they defined it). While completing the analyses, three themes emerged that needed further exploration. These themes include – youth development, sense of belonging and community development, and deep motivations for working in these contexts. These themes are the focus of this report. Highlighting these themes will give our community partners, governments, and funders a sense, within these sports programs, of **how volunteers and employees understand their work** (with respect to how it helps children and youth develop), **how they feel while doing this work**, (with respect to sense of belonging and community development) and **why they do this work** (deep motivations). We also feel a responsibility to share the leaders’ voices about the value of these programs and activities and, ultimately, some of the conversational paths that might help our community partners and other community sport organizations continue to deliver transformative sport programming and events for children and youth.

So, **what did we learn about how leaders understand their work**, with respect to youth development?

- Young and established leaders from all three community partners identified their work as being rooted in Positive Youth Development (PYD) principles (without naming the development model specifically). This suggests that the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC (and affiliates) seem to be successfully incorporating PYD in their programs and events, which is congruent with their missions.
- While the leaders’ understandings of their work are most closely aligned with PYD, we were not surprised that some of their responses also fit within two models – Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD) and Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE) – that call for challenging the status quo by working towards social justice and youth empowerment.
- In fact, leaders in all three organizations claim to be interrogating their own motivations and identities and acknowledging the power, privilege (or lack thereof) and barriers constraining participants – a good start to work towards social justice and implementing SJYD.
- Aspects of CYE were identified by leaders from all three community partners, however, equitable power sharing between youth and adults, was not (although there were some programs discussed that partially address this power sharing).
- In addition to youth development, leaders from all three community partners spoke about the type of leader they want to be. We determined that many of the leaders’ conceptualizations about who they want to be fit most closely with servant leadership, a type of leadership in which leaders help leadership grow by sharing power with others in an organization, showing self-awareness and

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<sup>1</sup> According to Coakley (2015), many people’s belief in the “inherent purity and goodness of sport”, that “the purity and goodness of sport is transmitted to those who participate in or consume it and that sport inevitably leads to individual and community development” (what he refers to as the Great Sport Myth) has historically caused a hesitancy to question or criticize sport (p. 403). However, recent sport scandals and revelations about high-profile athletes’ mental health challenges have necessitated critiques of sport at all levels, including questioning what “good sport” is.

<sup>2</sup> We define “good sport” as sport that follows True Sport’s (2023) recipe (or basic principles). These principles include: Go For It, Play Fair, Respect Others, Keep It Fun, Stay Healthy, Include Everyone and Give Back.

fostering the same quality in others, thinking critically about their actions (what we call reflexivity) and encouraging others to follow suit, providing support to others and showing them that they are part of something much larger than themselves. This leadership style makes sense given some of the leaders' references to social justice.

- Some leaders spoke (implicitly) to another approach that guides their work (one not specifically focused on youth development) – the Capabilities Approach (CA) – which consists of seeking out what members or participants can do and based on this knowledge, helping them become what they can be.

**Conversational paths** we suggest all three community partners embark on:

*Positive Youth Development (PYD)*

- Continue to talk about, train leaders, and deliver programs and events rooted in positive youth development. At the same time, explore and incorporate other models.

*Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD)*

- Talk about SJYD at the board, young and established leader, and participant levels.
- Incorporate SJYD principles into leader training programs and wherever else possible.
- Accept and discuss the “messiness” that comes with putting youth development models and theory into practice.

*Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE)*

- Talk about CYE at the board, young and established leader, and participant levels.
- Incorporate CYE into leader training programs.
- Try to get more power sharing happening (involve youth participants)
- Try to share some aspects of power in organizational, planning, and staging processes of programs and events by including participants in decision-making bodies.

*Servant Leadership*

- Explore the principles of servant leader frameworks.
- Incorporate servant leader principles into leader training programs.

*Capabilities Approach (CA)*

- Focus on “what are people able to do and what are they able to be” and find ways of training leaders and delivering programs that help children, youth and the leaders themselves, get there.

**What did we learn about how leaders feel while doing this work**, with respect to sense of belonging and community development?

- Based on our conversation with young and established leaders, the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG seem to be extremely successful at developing “communities” where leaders feel they “belong”.
- The BGC Ottawa offers young and established leaders (and, arguably members, given most of these leaders came to their roles after having been members) a strong sense of belonging.
- By contrast, young and established leaders from the JA and the AWG have a sense of belonging to their language, sports, contingents and places they live rather than the JA or the AWG specifically.
- Regardless, feeling a sense of belonging to some community because of participating and subsequently volunteering or working at the BGC Ottawa, JA, or AWG was impactful for all leaders.
- All three community partners also seem to be extremely successful at fostering, in their leaders, a desire to develop the communities to which they belong (however they describe them).

- Young leaders often described the BGC Ottawa as the “community” to which they are contributing. Established BGC Ottawa leaders saw the “community” they are developing as the city of Ottawa (and/or a specific Ottawa neighbourhood).
- By contrast, young and established leaders from the JA and the AWG mostly do not describe these events (and what they attempt to promote, including the Francophonie in the case of the JA and the North, in the case of the AWG) as the “communities” they are helping develop. However, both the JA and the AWG are seen as places where multiple identities are allowed to coalesce, suggestive that these events provide space for volunteers and workers to contribute to some form of community (i.e., the community they feel personally connected to) while engaging in their volunteer and work activities.

**Conversational paths** we suggest all three community partners embark on:

*Sense of Belonging*

- Foster discussions among young and established leaders about what constitutes their sense of belonging through their work with the organization.
- Accept and discuss the “messiness” that comes with sense of belonging (and identity).

*Community Development*

- Foster discussions among young and established leaders about what community/ies they feel they are serving.
- Accept and discuss the “messiness” that comes with leaders’ feelings about what community (who) they are contributing to. Encourage leaders to contribute to a community, any community.

**What did we learn about why they do this work** (what are their deep motivations)?

- Leaders’ responses to questions about why they do the work they do (from all three community partners) were linked to concepts of reciprocity, responsibility, and resonance.
- More young and established leaders from the BGC Ottawa (in fact, almost all) referred (implicitly) to reciprocity (with some also referring to responsibility) while only about half from the JA referred to reciprocity and as many to responsibility (again some referring to both). Most leaders from the AWG identified with both reciprocation and responsibility.
- There were only a few references to resonance in each case.
- Determining whether leaders feel required to “give back” or, through reflection and/or reflexivity, actively choose to “give back” (as reciprocity, out of a sense of responsibility or due to feelings of resonance or any combination of these), is important, especially given the broader social transformation in which we seem to be moving from collective to more individualistic motivations for non-profit sector work and volunteer activity.
- Our reading, based on the expansive review of literature and data analysis we completed for our larger project, is that **“giving back” is not about “checking the box” – i.e., “giving back” because a person is supposed to (including if they are paid to), but rather it is most fulfilling and special for volunteers and workers when there is reflexivity and a deep connection with the organizations due to past valuable, positive experiences.**
- Leaders can effectively “give back” because of feelings of reciprocity and/or responsibility, however, we suggest that resonance is the most consequential deep motivation for the BGC Ottawa, SJA (and affiliates) and AWGIC (and affiliates), and moving forward, attempts to create the conditions for resonance to occur would be beneficial.

**Conversational paths** we suggest all three community partners embark on:

*Reciprocation, Responsibility and Resonance*

- Discuss reciprocation, responsibility and resonance with leaders in training. Decide what (if any) concept fits best with organizational mission and values.

- Create an environment where positive emotions for “giving back” (such as gratitude) are celebrated.
- Find ways of setting the conditions for resonance to occur – for all involved.

While sharing our learnings within each theme, as well as our suggested conversational paths as important, we want to impress upon readers the most important finding from this research is that, in order for “good sport” to happen, **reflexivity is key**. Reflexivity is important because, as a society, while we want people to “do good”, we want them to consider their actions rather than just doing what they are told to do by governments, organizations and other institutions. This kind of critical thinking can help people feel happier and arguably more connected to their communities. We suggest, based on our interviews, that many leaders from all three community partners engage in reflexivity, which contributed to their successful leadership experiences. We suggest that our community partners encourage all involved (e.g., leaders, staff, participants, parents, etc.) to start (or continue) to engage in reflexivity with respect to:

- helping children and youth build life skills
- social justice
- youth empowerment
- leadership and the impact leaders have on those they serve
- helping children and youth become what they can be
- sense of belonging
- community development
- motivations for “giving back”

Overall, the themes we focused on in this report work together to sustain volunteer and worker engagement over time. Our analysis suggests that the leaders share a devotion to children and youth, feel as though they belong and contribute to a community that is somehow connected to the sport program and/or event they are working for, and “give back”, out of feelings of reciprocity, responsibility or resonance. The conversational paths we suggest to our community partners (with a strong emphasis on engaging in reflexivity throughout all conversations) call for challenging and/or dismantling some of the current sports and physical activity systems at a deep level. This requires that our community partners place an emphasis on community development, over and above sport development.

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- Second, the co-operation of BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG Directors and staff was also greatly appreciated and necessary to complete this research. They participated in interviews and generously helped recruit young and established leaders for interviews. We are most grateful to these people for facilitating the research and we hope they will find this report useful as they move forward as an organization.
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## Introduction: Who, What and Why?

The Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGC Ottawa), la Société des Jeux de l'Acadie (SJA) and the Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC) are three organizations working to help children and youth<sup>3</sup> have valuable experiences and become active participants in Canadian society through community sport. The BGC Ottawa provides programming, including sport programming, for children and youth, many of whom are in need, the SJA organizes the Jeux de l'Acadie (JA) to strengthen the Acadian Francophone minority throughout the Canadian Atlantic Provinces while the AWGIC govern the Arctic Winter Games (AWG) a biennial sport competition hosted in the circumpolar north that provide an opportunity for young developing athletes and artistic performers from northern regions around the world to compete while sharing cultural values. These three organizations offer community sport opportunities that emphasize youth development, social relationships and enjoyment through competition (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2024). We partnered with these organizations and their affiliates (e.g., delegations and contingents, host societies) in our exploration of the experiences of adults who “give back” to their communities.

What is “giving back”? In this report, “giving back” is described as an aspect of community engagement that has not yet been extensively researched or discussed in sport. Community engagement has been explored in sports literature (e.g., Dallaire 2014, 2017; Misener & Trussell, 2021; Rosso & McGrath, 2017; Spaaij, 2012), and it continues to be a relevant point of discussion for scholars, governments, practitioners and funders. We define community engagement as the act of working to make a difference in the day-to-day life of a person's community, through political and/or non-political means. This work can take paid and unpaid forms. According to Flanigan and Levine (2010), “civic [community] engagement of young adults is important both for the functioning of a democratic society and for individual development.” (p. 173). Furthermore, generational theories suggest that young people must engage with their communities to learn how to keep them operational once they become their leaders (Flanigan and Levine, 2010). Engagement thus helps individuals feel a sense of belonging to their communities and a sense of purpose as they act towards community change that reflects community needs and desires. In many studies (e.g., Misener & Doherty, 2012), research participants reference their engagement by talking about “giving back” to their community. While the concept of “giving back” has not specifically been explored in research looking at community engagement, it has been explored in other sport contexts, for example by Dickson et al., (2014) in their analysis of mega-event volunteers at the Olympic Games, in which they suggest that giving back plays a major role in the context of event volunteering and is linked to volunteer legacy. Welty Peachy et al. (2014) also spoke about “giving back” with respect to Sports for Development and Peace (SDP) workers' motivations for contributing to a multinational sport-for-development (SfD)<sup>4</sup> event. In practice, the concept of “giving back” has been used by sport organizations trying to work towards “better sport” (see, for example, True Sport, which includes Giving Back in their True Sport Principles and shares ideas for how sports teams and individuals can “give back” at <https://truesportpur.ca/ways-give-back>). Work in sport studies and at the practitioner level referring to the concept of “giving back” is valuable because it can help sport scholars, organizers, politicians and funders understand that volunteers (unpaid) and workers (paid) undertake work in their communities in part because they want to “give back” to others, that this “giving back” often extends beyond sport (i.e., the goal is to help individuals and communities flourish inside of and outside of sport) and that “giving back” may ultimately help people feel more connected to their communities.

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<sup>3</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any person under the age of 18. The United Nations defines ‘youth’ as persons aged between 15 and 24 (for statistical purposes) but the U.N. is quick to add that context is always important to consider when using the term. In other jurisdictions around the world, people are considered youth once they reach age 12. For example, in Ontario's youth justice system, people aged 12-17 are considered youth. All three of our community partners service both children and youth. The BGC Ottawa provides programming for ages 6-17 (inclusive), which includes people in the middle-late childhood and youth categories, the SJA run sports events for ages 9-17 (inclusive), which includes people in late-childhood and youth, and the AWGIC runs events for ages 11-18, also late childhood and youth.

<sup>4</sup> According to Darnell et al., (2022), “sport-for-development (SfD) refers to sport-based interventions designed to support and achieve non-sport goals like gender empowerment, health promotion, peace and conflict resolution, and positive youth development” (p. 250).

Why do this research? Feeling connected to a community (or multiple communities) is something we all need to lead good lives. Unfortunately, it is becoming more challenging than ever to forge and maintain these connections. To further understand peoples' experiences and their connections to their communities, it is important to continue to ask questions about why workers and volunteers choose to "give back" and how they make sense of their experiences. We wanted to find out – in a community sport context<sup>5</sup>, to whom do people "give back" to and why do they do it? Our goal was to give our community partners, scholars and policy makers, including Canadian Heritage, a deeper understanding of how sport becomes an environment where adults invest themselves out of a desire to contribute to the development of children and youth and to the perpetuation of established communities serving them. To achieve this, we completed three case studies focusing on the sport programs and/or events run by our community partners (and their affiliates) and offered to children and youth. While the programs and events run by these groups have distinctive missions, participant profiles and operate in different regions of Canada, a key similarity is that BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG sports activities are executed by volunteers and employees, many of whom are former participants that continue their involvement by "giving back" to their communities. Drawing on the thoughts, feelings, experiences and stories shared in 58 interviews, including 32 with young leaders<sup>6</sup> and 26 with established leaders<sup>7</sup>, we attempted to answer three research questions:

- 1) How do these leaders define "community"?
- 2) What motivates their engagement – in particular, did their sporting and community experiences within these programs and/or events spark their desire to "give back"?
- 3) How do they make sense of their leadership responsibilities and actions?

In summary, we found that with respect to question #1, in each case, "community" was defined differently, with some young and established leaders suggesting that the BGC Ottawa, the JA and the AWG are communities in and of themselves while others defined community in other ways, such as the contingent or delegation they represent (at the JA or the AWG) or the neighbourhood, city, region or province or territory where they live. Of all three community partners, the BGC Ottawa was considered a "community" in and of itself the most often, while leaders involved with JA and AWG were more likely to reference the communities they represent, rather than the events themselves when asked about community.

Questions put back to the organizations included:

- Do the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG want to be seen as communities unto themselves, or is it more about using these programs and events to construct and solidify any kind of sense of belonging and/or community (and identity)?
- Do the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG want to be the "community" to which leaders return and contribute to as adults?

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<sup>5</sup> Few sport social scientists look at "community sport" in industrialized countries (see Schailleé, Theeboom, et al., 2021). While the definition of community sport is diverse and fluid, according to Schailleé, Haudenhuyse, et al., (2019), "most community sport initiatives are characterized by their accessibility, affordability, local focus, modest budgets and relatively informal structures...community sport initiatives typically use a flexible, adaptable, (semi) informal, people-centred approach, aimed at lowering the thresholds to participation in order to address the deficiencies of mainstream sport provisions. Furthermore, community sports are often approached as more than 'just' sport in the community, as it aims to address social, political and cultural dimensions of inequality" (p. 886). Misener and Trussell (2021) define "community sport" organizations (CSOs) as non-profit, membership-based associations that provide recreational and competitive sport opportunities for children and adults" (p.170). They state that "these organizations are run primarily by volunteers and offer important place-based leisure experiences within a particular city, town, neighbourhood, or rural municipality. CSOs act as critical mechanisms for people to form, express, share, and reshape individual and collective identities." (Misener & Trussell, 2021, p. 170). Our definition of community sport for this project melds these definitions.

<sup>6</sup> Leaders aged 17 to approximately 27, working in volunteer or paid roles directly with children and youth delivering programs, coaching teams (relatively new to coaching), serving as mission staff, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Leaders aged approximately 28 and up, working in volunteer or paid roles coaching teams (experienced coaches), managing young leaders and/or making decisions on boards, committees or societies. Our intention for this project was to focus on young leaders and explore the thoughts of established leaders to help contextualize the young leaders' responses but due to Covid-19, we refocused our research and included all leaders' interview responses throughout this report and other knowledge transfer documents and presentations.

- Do the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG want to be seen as “communities” that challenge other sporting communities, because they arguably take a more inclusive and “friendlier” approach to sport?

For question #2, leaders had overwhelmingly positive descriptions of their participant experiences and were committed to their acts of “giving back”, partly or mostly as a result of these formative experiences. Former members and participants were thus motivated to “give back” because they wanted other children and youth to benefit from valuable experiences, like they did, or because they felt all children and youth deserve such opportunities. This cycle suggests that organizations and events, such as the BGC Ottawa, the JA, and the AWG may be offering “value-based” sport<sup>8</sup> which could play a major role in leaders’ desire to “give back”. Interestingly, in all three settings, little training emphasizing the mission and values of the organizations was required because these former participants had already bought into them (as participants). Furthermore, the BGC Ottawa and the JA<sup>9</sup> were strategic in identifying former participants as potential leaders and inviting them to apply for leadership positions, which not only helped the organizations staff their programs and events but also gave the young people we spoke to a boost because they felt valued and recognized for their abilities. Young leaders from these organizations told us that they had been surprised and/or pleased to be recruited and in some cases, they would have never thought of coming forward to work with these programs and events.

Questions put back to the organizations included:

- Are the BGC Ottawa, JA AWG trying to foster in its current participants a desire to “give back”? If so, how this is done now and what could help further foster the desire to “give back”.
- Should recruitment be prioritized, especially for former participants or other people who may not otherwise apply?
- What about training? Should all those involved be trained with respect to social justice values? What would this look like?

For question #3, leaders explained what their goals were, in their current volunteer or work roles and what kind of person they wanted to be, in these roles. Some also spoke about the social responsibility the organizations (and affiliates) had towards individuals and the communities they described (see Misener et al., 2020 for more on social responsibility of CSOs). While most leaders chose to express specific goals (such as helping members and participants have fun), and specific kinds of people they want to be while at the Clubs or the Games (such as a role model, someone who helps, who is approachable to answer questions, and who people will trust to solve problems), a few responses from young and established leaders indicated that their aspirations extended beyond the Clubs or the Games. These leaders want to be people who support the “community,” however they defined it. Furthermore, it was clear that many leaders interviewed favour horizontal and collaborative governance rather than centralized, hierarchical decision-making. Without having done an in-depth analysis of the governance processes within the Clubs, the JA movement, or the AWG structure, the interviews conducted for this study indicate that the operation of these organizations are, in some respects, decentralized and allow a certain latitude. It is in this context that young and established leaders, especially those in coaching, mission staff and employee roles, feel they have freedom of action. It is relevant that young and established leaders had already reflected on the type of person they want to be through their involvement with the BGC Ottawa, the JA and the AWG and all of them could speak to what could have been a difficult question. Their thoughtful answers revealed that contributing to these initiatives is meaningful to their sense of self, and not merely a habitual practice. It is a very deliberate engagement which relates to how they view the BGC Ottawa, the JA and the AWG as congruent with their goals and values but also as a site that allows community engagement. In other words, we found that the organizations seemed to offer volunteers and employees

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<sup>8</sup> According to Coletti and Allan (2023), “the aim of sport delivery that is values-based is to create an environment that encourages values like (but not exclusive to) good character, physical literacy, community and belonging. Another goal of values-based sport is to create good citizens and well-rounded individuals through sport” (website <https://sirc.ca/blog/approaches-to-optimize-sport-experience/>).

<sup>9</sup> Leaders who were former AWG participants may also have been recruited in this way, however, this did not emerge in our interviews.

a space in which to reflect (and, in some cases, think reflexively) on their actions and their place within their communities, albeit in different ways.

Questions put back to the organizations included:

- In what ways do / can the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG engage in aspects of social responsibility?
- What are your suggestions to enhance this engagement in the future?
- How can the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG continue to foster meaningful community engagement in ways that are congruent with their mission and values?
- How can the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG enable greater involvement in ways that ensure individual goals fit within the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG mission and values?

Ultimately, conclusions gleaned from answering our three research questions suggest that “giving back” to children and youth through sports may help BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG volunteers and employees have a heightened sense of belonging to their communities, may also help the people they serve feel connected, may contribute to tighter knit communities, and may ultimately lead to new or “better” ways of doing sport. By looking at aspects of community engagement, particularly this notion of “giving back”, via these questions, we came to an understanding of why people volunteer and work in these contexts, and shared these findings in our reports presented to each organization (see Dallaire and MacKay, 2019 February, Dallaire et MacKay, novembre 2019 and MacKay and Dallaire, 2023 November), presentations at local and international conferences, and in forthcoming academic publications.

In this comparative report, we move away from these questions and instead highlight three important themes that stuck out for us while answering our research questions – youth development, sense of belonging and community development and deep motivations for working in these contexts. Highlighting these themes gives our community partners a sense, within these sports programs, of **how their volunteers and employees understand their work** (with respect to how it helps children and youth develop), **how they feel while doing this work**, (with respect to sense of belonging and community development) and **why they do this work** (deep motivations). Focusing on these themes helps us appreciate how volunteers and workers understand, feel about, and explain why they do this work, but it also allows us to share their voices about the value of and work required to perpetuate these kinds of programs and activities. Additionally, by elucidating volunteer and workers’ feelings about their contributions, we can address whether they are reflecting on and reflexive<sup>10</sup> about their actions. We suggest that both reflection and reflexivity are fundamental because, as a society, while we want people to “do good”, we want them to consider their actions rather than just doing what they are told to do by governments, organizations and other institutions. Furthermore, reflection may lead to reflexivity, which can ultimately help people feel happier and arguably more connected to their communities, crucial in these times!

The structure of this report is as follows. First, we briefly describe the three organizations we studied. Next, we describe our methodology. Subsequently, we highlight the three major themes that emerged from our analysis, by: describing the theme and their associated terms, explaining how interview participants within the organizations spoke about the theme, discussing how the theme is important in terms of sport program delivery and, ultimately, suggesting ways forward – i.e., how we believe practitioners can help support people, like the leaders we had conversations with, continue to “give back” reflexively in an evolving sport landscape. The three themes include:

1. **Youth development** – here we explain our reading of the concepts of Positive Youth Development (PYD), Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD), Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE) and connect these with the concept of servant leadership and the Capabilities Approach (CA)

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<sup>10</sup> According to Jamieson, et al., (2019), with respect to researchers “reflexivity refers to the conscious, active acknowledgement of one’s own belief, bias, and judgement systems before, during, and after the actual research process. In contrast, reflection is often done retrospectively and typically leads to insights about details that were ‘missed’ in the original research process”. (p 2). We feel that these terms can be applied to volunteers and workers by substituting “program delivery process” or “event staging process” for “research process” in this explanation.

## 2. Sense of belonging and community development

3. “Giving back” as **reciprocation** for something received, a **responsibility** to act, or because of a feeling of **resonance** (i.e., being in tune with the BGC Ottawa, JA or AWG.)

We conclude the report with a discussion that applauds our community partners for the work they are doing and invites them and others delivering sport programs and events for Canadian children and youth to challenge deeply held beliefs about sport and (start or continue) offering something “better”.

Our hope is that that our work underscores the importance of the work these organizations and events are doing, to governments, funders, other scholars and the organizations themselves. We also hope this report illuminates how the themes coalesce into broader lines of inquiry about the meaning of “community” and how “giving back” can contribute to social justice and empowerment in the context of child and youth development. The paths forward we suggest for organizations that, through sports and recreation, serve children and youth, call for challenging and/or dismantling some of the current sports and physical activity systems at a deep level. An important part of this challenge is to move away from focusing on sport development and instead focus on community development. While we acknowledge the relevance of sport development and emphasize that we are not rejecting the value of sport development aspects in these programs and events, we feel that the development of sport skills is but a piece in a bigger picture – one that must be created and sustained by organizations like the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC and their affiliates.

It is important to mention that this study (overall) and report stand out for their analysis of the sports and recreation context as a place of engagement for adults (most of whom are younger than 40) seeking to contribute to youth development and community development. Existing studies on youth engagement and youths’ relationship to the community focus on youth civic action in political spheres at the municipal level and in activist organizations (e.g. Beaumont, 2010; Finlay et al., 2010; Levine & Higgins-d’Alessandro, 2010; Linds et al., 2010; Quintelier, 2008; Tossutti, 2003, 2007). This study also stands out from the growing studies on sport as a site for the development of young people’s social skills (e.g. Forneris et al., 2015; Lapointe et al., 2012; Laberge et al., 2012; Turnidge et al., 2014; Whitley et al., 2014, 2015), because the aim here is to study the commitment of young and established adults who become leaders in sport after their time in the programs. We attempted to understand how and why these adults are committed to supporting the development of young people and their communities. Finally, this research contributes to the sports sociology literature on community development. Few sports sociologists today focus on sport and community development in industrialized countries (see Kay & Bradbury, 2009; Lawson, 2005; McSweeney et al. 2023; Pitter & Andrews, 1997; Sharpe et al., 2016; Skinner et al., 2008; Steinmann et al., 2022) focusing instead on sport as a tool for international development (among many others, Burnett, 2001, 2006, 2009; Coalter, 2011, 2013; Darnell, 2011, 2012, 2016; Kidd, 2008). Those that do focus on development in Canada tend to focus on development in and/or of Indigenous communities (see Gardam et al., 2017, for a scoping review of the body of literature that focuses on these programs, as well as Arellano & Downey, 2019; Bruner et al., 2016; Essa et al., 2022), although work is being done by some Canadian scholars, exploring bicycles for development programs (e.g., Steinmann et al., 2022) and community development through community sport programs (e.g., Gatt & Trussell, 2022; Trussell, 2020). While our research is unique in its exploration of sport as a place of engagement for adults (particularly young adults) seeking to contribute to the development of youth and communities in the Canadian context, our aim for completing this research is not unique. Much like innumerable social scientists writing about sports for decades, social justice is a priority in our professional and personal lives. We believe that a more just society is possible; but to get there all of us, particularly those of us in privileged positions, must act – in our professional lives, through avenues such as this research report as well as in our personal lives, through interactions with family, friends and those we share our communities with. Our impetus for completing this research was thus to attempt to have an impact (no matter how big or small) on the Canadian sport system. While we hope to continue to engage in this kind of work, we call on our colleagues to join us and complete more research on the social mechanisms through which sport and recreation by and for community members reinforce local communities.

## Community Partners

We focused on three organizations that help Canadian children and youth have valuable experiences and become active participants in (Canadian) society by giving them opportunities to gain different types of skills (e.g., life, physical), to socially connect and to develop a sense of belonging to their communities, the Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGC Ottawa), la Société des Jeux de l'Acadie (SJA) and the Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC).

### Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGC Ottawa)

The BGC Ottawa is a local club of Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (BGC Canada) and has several locations in the Ottawa area that provide after-school and weekend programming, including sports and physical activities and a summer camp (Camp Smitty), for children and youth (6-18 years of age) in need. Their mission is “to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life” (BGC Ottawa, 2020). Managers recruit many of their youth workers (paid employees), who do much of the day-to-day work with the children and youth, from their current membership by encouraging them to apply for job postings. Many of these applicants have been members for extended periods of time, with some of them having completed leadership programs run by the BGC Ottawa. As such, the mission of the BGC Ottawa is enacted, in large part, by former members who return to work at the club as youth workers, camp counselors, etc.

### Société des Jeux de l'Acadie (SJA)

The SJA organizes the Jeux de l'Acadie (JA), which is a two-tiered sport program including regional competitions leading to a large annual sporting event that acts as a community building strategy to attract and retain Francophone youths and to strengthen the Acadian Francophone minority throughout the Canadian Atlantic Provinces. The mission of the organization is “to develop the JA movement by contributing to the development of Francophone youth (aged 10-17) from the Atlantic Provinces through sports competitions and cultural activities” (JA, 2023, our translation). The games are planned and administered by paid employees but are executed primarily by volunteer coaches, mission staff (the Maritime Provinces are divided in to nine regions and each region recruits their own coaches and mission staff) and event staff (who are employed by the organizing committee of the host city or region – Comité organisateur de la Finale de Jeux de l'Acadie or COFJA). The athletes that qualify at the regional games move on to what is known as “la Finale” (the final), which is the goal and is hosted in a different location each year. Many of the paid employees and volunteers (including all those interviewed in this project) participated in the JA as children and/or youths and returned to paid jobs or to volunteer at the games, either immediately after their participation eligibility was up or years later.

### Arctic Winter Games International Committee (AWGIC)

The AWGIC organizes the Arctic Winter Games (AWG), which takes place biennially and “is a high-profile circumpolar sport competition for northern and arctic athletes. The Games provide an opportunity to strengthen sport development in the participants' jurisdictions, to promote the benefits of sport, to build partnerships, and to promote culture and values. The Games celebrate sport, social exchange and cultures. The Games provide an opportunity for the developing athlete to compete in friendly competition while sharing cultural values from northern regions around the world” (AWG International Committee, 2022). The AWG are hosted in a different location each time however, some locations have hosted multiple times. The Games are overseen by the volunteer AWG International Committee but are executed primarily by host society (local organizing committee) staff and volunteers as well as volunteer coaches and contingent mission staff and volunteers. Many of the paid employees and volunteers (including most

of those interviewed in this project) participated in the AWG as children or youths and returned to paid jobs or to volunteer at the games, either immediately after their participation eligibility was up or years later. Of note – Indigeneity is a defining aspect of recent editions of the AWG, and thus holds an important place in the sport (e.g., Dene Games and Arctic Sports) and cultural (e.g., ceremonies) programs. Consistently, fewer than half of all participants identify as Indigenous (see Lankford et al. 1998, 2000, 2002, 2010, 2012, 2014), however, some of those that do claim that the AWG provide them with a unique opportunity to compete in sport and/or cultural performances rarely accessible to them given the size and the remoteness of the communities in which they live. Increasingly, host societies are recognizing this and working with Indigenous people and communities to find ways to expand inclusion and challenge long standing power structures with the goal of empowering Indigenous peoples.

Why the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG? While these community organizations operate in different geographical locations and have distinctive participant<sup>11</sup>, worker and volunteer profiles, a key similarity is that BGC Ottawa, JA sports activities and AWG are run by many former participants that continue their involvement as employees or volunteers to “give back” to their communities. Furthermore, in this study, we are looking at employees and volunteers in three distinct organizations who are driven to accomplish a similar goal – using sport (in the BGC Ottawa’s case as part of their overall programming) as a tool to help children and youth become active citizens in their communities and/or to lead a life they value.

Of note, many workers with the BGC Ottawa (including those interviewed for this project) were paid, while volunteers carry out most of the work for the JA and the AWG (some, however, are paid, including a few of the young and established leaders we interviewed). The young and established adult leaders doing paid work with the BGC Ottawa, the JA and the AWG contributed extra unpaid hours and exuded a certain energy, specifically through their commitment to the BGC Ottawa, SJA, and AWGIC’s missions of serving youth and the community through sport, which suggests that rather than viewing their involvement as a “job”, they view it as “meaningful work” (see Nikolova et al., 2020) to which they are willing to give more of themselves, much like volunteers. While Stebbins (2017) noted that the values and requirements that satisfy volunteers may differ than those that satisfy paid workers, our finding is that pay is not the primary motivation for starting to work or staying with organizations (like the BGC Ottawa, SJA (and affiliates) and AWGIC (and affiliates)) that carry out community work (see Wang, 2022, for more on this) and that paid workers spoke of their work in similar ways to those who volunteered. Several references alluded to this in our interviews. For example, young leader Jacob (BGC Ottawa), stated that he often came to (paid) work early to play sports with BGC Ottawa members because he enjoyed it, thus acting in his role as a youth worker in an unpaid capacity. He also noted that while he was paid to coach a sports team at the Club, he would have coached regardless of whether he was paid or not. When asked why she chose to work at the BGC Ottawa rather than get a job in the fast-food industry, another BGC Ottawa young leader, Anna, stated that as an older member who took initiative to help the staff, she was already so invested in working with BGC members that it made sense to take a job there and earn a little money while doing what she enjoys and is adept at doing. Established leaders also spoke about their work with the BGC Ottawa as starting out as volunteer based, then paid minimally, and later paid, full-time, at lower rates than other organizations but worth doing because of the strong connection they had with the Club. Some established leaders involved with the AWG who were paid for their work also talked about starting out as volunteers. These workers (of which there were few) then got paid jobs in the sports sector (e.g., with governments) and the AWG became one of their portfolios. These established leaders stated that there was a significant commitment of unpaid hours to which they enthusiastically completed or that they continued to volunteer for the AWG in capacities outside of those required of them in their paid work. This is not surprising given that researchers (e.g., Binder, 2016) highlight the mental health benefits of volunteer work and suggest that working in the non-profit sector is good for individuals’ job satisfaction despite lower incomes and more work than in other sectors of paid work, primarily because work in community organizations has similar benefits (to volunteering) for workers’ mental health. Given the numerous studies highlighting the similarities between paid workers in non-profit settings and volunteers, and the references paid employees made about their choices to do paid work for our community partners, we comfortably compared the interview material of paid workers and volunteers in this project.

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<sup>11</sup> The BGC Ottawa targets youth in socioeconomically challenged neighbourhoods while eligibility requirements for the JA are tied to French language and Acadian culture. Participation in the AWG is contingent on an athlete living above the 55<sup>th</sup> parallel.

# Methodology

## Research Approach

One-on-one conversations between Christine Dallaire and 58 young and established leaders are the focus of this research. We categorize these conversations as in-person (BGC Ottawa and JA interviews) or online (AWG interviews<sup>12</sup>) semi-structured interviews. Why choose these kinds of interviews to find out more about “giving back”? Interviews allow people to converse in deeply personal ways, and through conversations, the interviewer and interview participant co-construct knowledge. According to Smith and Sparkes (2016), “interviews are particularly valuable sources of knowledge about experience and meaning. When done well qualitative interviews are an effective way for people to describe their experiences in rich and detailed ways, as well to give their perspectives and interpretations of these experiences” (p. 108).

Thirty-two (32) semi-structured interviews were conducted with young leaders (aged 17-27). Participants connected to the BGC Ottawa, including nine (9) BGC Ottawa Youth Workers, worked in a range of roles and various locations, with primary responsibilities including working at the front/welcome desk as well as program design, implementation and management. Participants connected to the JA held a variety of roles, as well. Seven (7) were JA delegation volunteer coaches or assistant coaches, four (4) were SJA or COFJA employees or volunteers, two (2) were JA delegation mission staff and six (6) were young leaders who had held multiple roles with the JA, including being part of a delegation as a coach, assistant coach, mission staff, SJA or COFJA staff or volunteer. Participants connected to the AWG (4) worked as coaches in a variety of sports and for various contingents. Interview participants ranged in age from 17 to 27. Twenty (20) identified as women and twelve (12) as men. All interview participants were former members of the BGC Ottawa (many attended Camp Smitty as well), former participants in the JA (all but one competed in the Finals) or participants in the AWG and thus had long histories with the organizations and/or their delegations/contingents. Participants were recruited to partake in an interview by the BGC Ottawa and JA administrators, as well as by AWG chefs de mission. One semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant and averaged 63 minutes. A pseudonym was chosen for each interview participant with careful consideration to Allen and Wiles’ (2016) assertion that “. . . the common practice of allocating pseudonyms to confer anonymity is not merely a technical procedure, but renaming has psychological meaning to both the participants and the content and process of the research” (p. 149). Though we focus on the young leaders’ motivations to “give back” in this report, in order to tease these out, participants were asked to describe: the BGC Ottawa, the JA, or the AWG, their experiences as a member/participant, their recruitment experience as a volunteer or employee, the sports/physical activity program(s) in which there are involved as an employee or a volunteer, their experience as a volunteer or employee, their contribution to community development and their sense of community belonging. Prior to or after the interviews with some BGC Ottawa young leaders, Christine Dallaire completed a period of observation. Christine Dallaire also attended some of the events at the 2018 JA and the entire 2023 AWG. The purpose of the observation periods prior to and after the interviews and attending the events was to understand the context to refer to when posing questions and when analyzing data as well as for “getting a feel” for the environments, activities and events.

In addition, twenty-six (26) semi-structured interviews were conducted with BGC Ottawa, JA, and AWG established leaders (aged 28+) including administrators, managers and volunteers in top leadership roles. Fifteen (15) interview participants identified as women and eleven (11) as men. Participants worked in a range of roles at the BGC Ottawa and for the SJA and AWGIC, as well as on delegations/contingents and local organizing committees/host societies. BGC Ottawa administrators and managers’ primary responsibilities included hiring and managing staff and volunteers, fundraising, managing programs, managing facilities and communication. All participants (7 in total) held full-time, permanent positions at the BGC Ottawa except for two, one who served on the Board of Directors and one who was a very experienced youth worker who also worked full-time outside of the BGC Ottawa. He worked part-time, while maintaining a full-time job in the public service, as he wanted to continue his involvement with the BGC Ottawa and was a former participant turned long-time volunteer and worker identified by the BGC Ottawa as worthy of being

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<sup>12</sup> Salman Alavi, a doctoral student, took part as an observer in many of the online interviews with youth and established leaders involved in the AWG.

interviewed for the project. SJA/JA interviewees included the director (1) of the SJA as well as three (3) volunteers that served on the administrative council or were chef de mission or assistant chef de mission of a delegation. Participants (15 in total) working for the AWGIC, the AWG Host Society or for a delegation/contingent were either AWGIC board members, advisors for the Host Society, mission staff, experienced coaches for contingents or head officials. All three BGC Ottawa interviewees are former members who attended the club as children and/or youth, all four of the JA interviewees were former participants, and twelve of the fifteen AWG interview participants were former participants. Participants were recruited by the administrators. One semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant and averaged 77 minutes. Pseudonyms were also carefully chosen. Administrators, managers and high-level volunteers were asked to describe many of the same aspects of their experiences as were the young leaders. However, emphasis was placed on a different set of questions, which, for the BGC Ottawa, heavily focused on how the administrators and managers recruited members to apply to become young leaders (managers at the SJA could not speak to the recruitment of young volunteers given the diffuse and decentralized structure of the organization), how the BGC Ottawa, SJA (and delegations), and AWGIC (and Host Societies and contingents) selected young leaders who applied, the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC training procedures and how the administrators and managers actually trained their recruits (including formal and informal methods).

All interviews were conducted between October 2017 and February 2023<sup>13</sup> and were digitally recorded and transcribed. Drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 1977; Markula & Pringle, 2006; Shogan, 1999), the interviews were coded in order to understand how the young and established leaders spoke about the BGC Ottawa, JA or AWG, their experiences as members or participants, their experiences as volunteers or workers, and their sense of belonging and connectedness to community.

The interviews with young and established leaders provided us with rich and insightful findings. The richness and relevance of the data collected is a direct result of the recruitment procedure where interview participants were hand-picked by the administrators and were employed or volunteering with the BGC Ottawa, the SJA or a delegation, the AWGIC, Host Society or a contingent at the time of the interview. This purposeful recruitment served the object of the overall research project to gain a better understanding of “giving back” by exploring the experiences of young adults currently involved in community development through their leadership roles in child and youth programming. However, such a focus on former BGC Ottawa members, former JA, and AWG participants considered to be ‘champions’ of civic engagement within the organization has meant that their views may not be representative of all young and older adults who have worked or volunteered or who are currently working or volunteering at the club, with the JA or the AWG. Thus, this report does not offer an overall assessment of the experiences of all BGC Ottawa, JA, or AWG employees and volunteers. Furthermore, our goal was not to evaluate our community partners or determine whether community development actually occurs, rather our focus is on people reflecting on their contributions to community development. The recruitment strategy privileged for the overall research project also restricts our ability to assess to what extent the BGC Ottawa, JA, and AWG has an impact on child and youth engagement beyond the organization. Indeed, members, former members and participants are also engaged as young leaders in activities, associations, school programs and other organizations beyond the BGC Ottawa, JA, and AWG because of the leadership training they gained as members or participants and because they embrace the overall values of the BGC Ottawa, JA, and AWG to become engaged citizens in their communities. Thus, our chosen methodology does not enable us to speak to the broader impact of the BGC Ottawa, JA, and AWG in fostering youth engagement in the community at large. It does however allow a thorough exploration of how young and established leaders make sense of their community engagement through the BGC Ottawa, JA, and AWG and how they position their work as an act of “giving back”.

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<sup>13</sup> Our data collection period was extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic which forced community sport organizations to suspend their youth programming.

## Themes:

### THEME #1 – Youth Development<sup>14</sup>

While it is clear from institutional documents and Christine’s participant observation that the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC (and affiliates) focus on providing children and youth with development opportunities, an important line of inquiry for this project was **how the young and established leaders understood their work**. Leaders from all cases suggested, explicitly or implicitly, that youth development was a key part of their “giving back” work. Thus, the first theme we focus on in this report is youth development.

Before diving into our results, we thought we should address a fundamental question – what do we mean by youth development? The concept has been used in a multitude of settings, including in academic, governmental, practitioner based, etc., thus there are many definitions. Our reading of the concept is that as they move through late childhood and adolescence, young people go through significant cognitive, emotional, social, physical, and spiritual changes. They develop a stronger sense of identity and increase their independence from their parents and/or other care givers. Children and youth must integrate successfully into their communities and, eventually, grow up to become active members of society (whatever form this may take, in the paid workforce or not), which requires important competencies and ideas about the world that can only be gained through valuable experiences. Adults help young people with this development through the provision of rich environments and valuable experiences. Homes, schools, community programs, and sporting activities are some of the spaces in which children and youth can acquire the competencies and ideas about the world and live the experiences needed to thrive. The concept of youth development has shifted with time, however, and researchers and practitioners currently working in the field emphasize that effective programs and events recognize youths’ strengths and promote positive development, rather than focusing on youths’ detriments and “fixing” those problems (Iwasaki et al, 2014; Ward et al., 2013; MLSE Launchpad, 2024).

Several youth development approaches have been explored by researchers looking at sport and have been implemented by organizations offering sport, including Positive Youth Development (PYD), Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD) and Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE). We briefly share our understanding of each of these approaches and highlight if and where they occurred in each case. Furthermore, we looked at whether the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG young and established leaders fit the description of servant leaders based on their interview responses as well as whether they referenced aspects of the Capabilities Approach (CA). It is important to note that we did not ask questions specifically about youth development, leadership, or capabilities. However, references to the concepts came out spontaneously in the interviews when participants were asked what they think the organization or event is about, how they were trained, if the organization or event has a social responsibility to anyone, what their goals are, what kind of person they want to be, etc.

### Positive Youth Development (PYD)

#### What Is It?

The PYD approach emerged in the late 1990s, aiming to address the psychosocial development of young people. Since its emergence, PYD has been used to design programs and events that consider children and youth as community assets who represent potential, rather than a societal problem in need of management (how they were viewed in the past). While the definition of “good citizen” is fluid and

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<sup>14</sup> We use youth development as our theme title and highlight youth development approaches, even though we speak of both children and youth throughout our research. As mentioned earlier, we see “youth” as a flexible category.

constantly shifting (see Pykett et al., 2010), and while children and youth often have their own citizenship vocabulary (see Thorson, 2012), PYD programs and events attempt to engage children and youth and help them acquire qualities Canadians' feel represent "good citizens" <sup>15</sup>.

According to Iwasaki et al., (2014),

"PYD seeks to promote a variety of developmental competencies that young people need at individual, social, and system levels to become productive, contributing members of society. Rather than a pathological focus, PYD adopts a holistic view of development by emphasizing the strengths, resources, and potentials of youth, and holds positive expectations regarding young people's growth and development and the contributions they can make to society" (p. 321).

Camire et al., (2022) suggest that since the early 2000s, scholars from many disciplines (including sport) have attempted to understand PYD-based programs and the theory behind them. Sport researchers (see Holt, 2016) who lauded these PYD-based programs used the framework to explain how sport (programs, etc.) can be a learning environment for acquiring physical (e.g., skills for healthy active living), personal (e.g., positive self-perceptions), and social (e.g., civic engagement) life skills<sup>16</sup>. Proponents (scholars, practitioners, etc.) of the framework continue to emphasize that PYD-based sport programs and tools (e.g., see [projectscore.ca](http://projectscore.ca)) can help with individual skill building, engagement, and empowerment.

## How Does It Emerge?

Our reading is that BGC Ottawa staff (voluntary and paid, established leaders at the management level and young leaders who are usually "on-the floor") use PYD to prepare children and youth for their role as "good citizens" and "community leaders" <sup>17</sup> in the Ottawa community (BGC Ottawa, 2018). According to the BGC Ottawa Vision Statement (BGC Ottawa, 2018), they do this by "enhancing life skills through the strength of their programs [based on four pillars which include education, physical activity and healthy lifestyle, leadership and social skills and creative arts] the physical environment they create and the community network they help develop within the communities they serve". While the club has provided youth with opportunities for over a century, its priorities and philosophies have changed to fit with PYD ideals. According to established leader Ashton:

If we were having this conversation in 1923, our big programs would have been boxing and woodworking, and it would have been taking kids off the streets. **Now it's more about empowerment and leadership and team building and communication and developing skills for life through activities.** It's through arts and crafts and through art leadership and through physical activity and through education and giving them the options and choices to do whatever they want to do when they're older.

Ashton explains here that, in theory, the BGC Ottawa helps members build life skills through the activities they offer. In the interviews, young and established leaders at the BGC Ottawa understood that to do their work, they are explicitly trained (in non-theoretical language) through formal courses, job shadowing and the employee handbook, all of which include many facets of PYD. Implicit "on-the-job" training was seen as perhaps even more impactful in learning how to work with youth.

<sup>15</sup> These also include obeying the law, active participation in the community, helping others, showing tolerance for others, respecting different religions – see Environics Institute, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Gould and Carson define life skills as "those internal personal assets, characteristics and skills such as goal setting, emotional control, self-esteem, and hard work ethic that can be facilitated or developed in sport and are transferred for use in non-sport settings" (Gould & Carson, 2008, p. 60). They also differentiate between PYD and life skills. They suggest that "while all life skills focus on positive youth development, not all positive youth development efforts focus on the development of life skills" (Gould & Carson, 2008, p. 60).

<sup>17</sup> Community leaders are defined in a multitude of ways. We define them as people who take responsibility for the well-being and improvement of their community.

Training and implementation of aspects of the PYD approach were referenced by young and established leaders, however, established leaders also noted that young leaders were frequently hired because of their previous experiences and way of being as a person – what was dubbed the “it factor”. This is a quality best described as an embodiment of the institutional moral code of the BGC Ottawa, whereby prospective staff uphold the values<sup>18</sup> and mission<sup>19</sup> (both of which make references to aspects of PYD) of the Club and are expected to model (and while modelling, continue the reflexive process of becoming) the “good citizen” in their work. Young leaders who have the “it factor” seemed to be deciding voluntarily to follow the BGC Ottawa’s moral code (i.e., to buy into it, to experience it, and to live by it) rather than conforming to a moral code to meet expectations. Because they are consciously reflexive rather than simply conforming, the BGC Ottawa’s young leaders are thus arguably deeply self-aware actors who think critically about their actions (required of servant leaders and practitioners promoting SJYD and CYE) rather than performing (and modelling) the role of productive and tolerant people unable to produce real change in the world around them. Training, then, is not a difficult task, as is suggested by Ashton, and the young leaders that possess the “it factor” seem to have a sense of how to implement PYD principles, even before they start working as youth workers:

It’s just to develop the skills because they already have the character and they already have... It’s just to make sure that they feel comfortable with their skills for the actual work. **So, I know that they have the “it” factor to go and do the work**, but it’s to provide them some extra skills or support past and above and beyond the management support that they’re receiving, for the day-to-day work and operations that we do.

Some young leaders suggest that their experiences as members led them to have the “it factor”, and they continue to develop this “it factor” by working at the BGC Ottawa. Established leaders also felt this is how they developed the “it factor”. We therefore see the BGC Ottawa’s work as cyclical – young leaders with the “it factor” (which we linked to servant leadership in our report to the BGC Ottawa) plausibly gained many of their leadership qualities through their experiences as Club members and are now working to foster these qualities in the younger generation.

Like the BGC Ottawa, the JA attract young and established leaders who, even if their individual objectives differ, all share the explicit desire to offer future generations the significant experience they had at the Games. The development of youth and the promotion of sports practice are at the heart of their commitment, as explained by young leader Martin:

Christine : Si t’avais à expliquer les Jeux de l’Acadie à quelqu’un qui ne les a jamais vu, maintenant que t’as l’expérience à titre d’athlète puis entraîneur, tu dirais quoi?

Martin: Bien si c’était un parent je dirais : « forcez vos jeunes à y aller ». Si c’était un jeune je lui dirais : « **c’est probablement la meilleure expérience que tu peux avoir en termes de développement personnel parce que tu vas te développer en tant qu’athlète, tu vas te développer aussi en tant que personne, puis ça c’est très important.** Tu vas rencontrer toutes sortes de gens, tu vas faire affaire avec toutes sortes de personnes. » Puis je crois qu’en tant qu’athlète tu grandis beaucoup, mais

<sup>18</sup> Core values include: inclusion and opportunity, respect and belonging, empowerment, collaboration and speaking out (BGC Ottawa, Employee Handbook, p. 8).

<sup>19</sup> To provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life.

en tant que jeune tu peux les voir les jeunes qui ont été aux Jeux de l'Acadie. C'est eux autres qui vont continuer à faire du sport, c'est eux autres qui vont continuer, surtout dans une petite région comme ici, c'est eux autres qui sont rendus à jouer du volleyball universitaire.

Young leader Victor and established leader Jérémie reiterate that at the JA, youth develop a variety of competencies that they need at individual, social, and system levels to become productive, contributing members of society:

Victor : Là, ça revient un peu aux Jeux du Canada<sup>20</sup>. Les Jeux du Canada t'es plus renfermé. Tu rencontres un peu de monde, mais pas tant. C'est plus vraiment assez compétition, compétition vraiment bien faire tandis que les Jeux de l'Acadie, oui, **t'as la compétition mais aussi le côté d'apprendre à connaître les autres, apprendre les différentes cultures de l'Acadie, apprendre à connaître de nouvelles personnes, apprendre sur toi-même, même.**

Jérémie : Le développement de soi, le développement de soi dans la compétition et dans le sport, je pense que c'est là que moi je vois une importance primordiale parce que le sport en tant que tel peut tellement développer qui est-ce que tu es puis peut te faire voyager, peut te faire rencontrer des gens. Tu sais, pour moi c'est un ensemble que je ne pourrais pas voir ou ne pas avoir dans ma vie. Pour moi c'est vraiment ça qui est l'important des Jeux de l'Acadie. C'est le tremplin vers le futur finalement, c'est le tremplin vers d'autres expériences, vers d'autres potentielles équipes, vers une compétition plus haute, vers la rencontre de gens que tu vas faire connaissance puis développer tes propres habilités interpersonnelles puis devenir une meilleure personne à travers le sport, je pense que c'est vraiment ça. **C'est vraiment le développement de soi-même, à travers le sport.**

Therefore, the young and established leaders we spoke with (implicitly) acknowledged PYD as part of their work and highlighted that it is through sport that the participants develop as people. Indeed, at the institutional level, PYD is clearly part of the JA project. According to the SJA Statutes and Regulations, the JA aspire to take a crucial role and be recognized as an important venue for « le développement de la jeunesse, de la langue française et de la culture acadienne » (SJA, Statuts et règlements, 2019, p. 1). Thus, volunteers and employees, whether working as administrators at the management and governance level or as coaches, mission leaders or members of COFJA, are dedicated to « l'épanouissement de la jeunesse francophone » through competitive sport and cultural activities (SJA, Statutes and regulations, 2019, p. 1).

As with the BGC Ottawa and the SJA, from institutional documents, participant observation and interview conversations, we get the sense that AWGIC is successfully enacting PYD. While interview participants remarked that coaches are not trained about youth development specifically for the AWG but rather through their sport specific coaching certifications, references to PYD are evident in policies and through the training processes for some volunteers. Young and established leaders suggested (unsolicited), when asked to describe the AWG, that the Games focus on friendship and developing participants as people, concepts also present in institutional documents. For example, according to established leader Theresa:

Yeah, so I think when it comes down to it, we don't, we really don't focus too much on medal performances and high-level competition for Arctic Winter Games, because we

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<sup>20</sup> The Canada Games brings together more than 2,000 able-bodied athletes and athletes with physical and intellectual disabilities every two years for the largest amateur multi-sport event in the country.

see these Games as a cultural experience. It's a social experience and **it's all about growth**, and the kids learn a lot of lessons.

Several participants spoke about how the AWG provide athletes with the opportunity to travel (often far distances), with some referring to the fact that AWG is often the first (and sometimes only) large scale sporting experience athletes of the North get, particularly those who might not have the opportunity to travel to other athletic competitions.

Christine: Is there a type of person you want the youth to be through participating at the Games?

Chester (Established leader): Well, I'd like to see them make healthy choices. I want them to be proud of who they are and where they came from, and how they behave. And I think the Arctic Winter Games certainly I think can help in that way, you know? I tell kids all the time "This is a big thing for you. You should be proud of yourself.

**Leaving your small community maybe for the first time, travelling on a plane, going somewhere you've never been and meeting new people, wow! Good for you. Look at all the experience.**" And they may never leave their community again, or maybe they'll say "It's not so bad out there. I love coming back to my home community, but I can leave and come back, right? "

One interview participant even called the AWG a "grown-up experience", which is suggestive of youth development.

Furthermore, there were many responses explaining that athlete development was an important goal, however, not the penultimate one – rather the development of youth was paramount.

Christine: It's always the tension between winning and the rest of the purpose of the Games.

Mairin (Established leader): Yeah, yeah. Interesting because one of our current board members, and he used to be a chef, I remember when I was chef in 2002 in Nuuk, Greenland, he was there as well, and we were outside watching the cross-country skiing and there was one of his kids – he's from Nunavut – and **one of his kids was like way like dead last and like getting lapped and everything and he said "You know what? It doesn't matter.** For every minute he's on the skis, like back home, he's not smoking a cigarette." And that, like that guy is still there. He's a Deputy Minister now in the Nunavut Government, you know, and he still has that kind of, like this is what it is.

Another established leader, Kit, referenced the focus on having youth understand and accept responsibility for their actions, and work towards becoming the "good citizen", through a code of conduct and behaviour expectations:

**Yes, there's a code of conduct for everybody to sign and that is very... that's kept, you know, it's important.** We don't want anyone... a mission staff are right in there immediately if there's any problems of our athletes being ignorant or rude or disrespectful. There's like huge policies. Vaping is huge, right? Huge on that. And of course, no alcohol. I mean, these kids are all underage. Most of them are. Almost all are underage. Some are not.

## Implications for Sport Program Delivery

It was not hard to find references to PYD in the AWG young and established leaders' responses to our questions. Policies and documents from the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC (and Host Societies) reference PYD principles and clearly strive to enact aspects of the development model. That young and established leaders from all three community partners identified their work as being rooted in PYD principles (without naming the development model specifically) suggests that the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC (and affiliates) are successfully incorporating PYD in their programs and events. Given that the leaders acknowledge PYD, which is congruent with their missions, all three organizations can be commended for their achievements with respect to PYD and strongly encouraged to continue their efforts.

Of note, leaders from all three organizations occasionally referenced prevention of behaviours such as gang activity, substance abuse, etc., which is not part of PYD but rather part of the deficit model previously used to explore youth development. This suggests leaders working in environments applying PYD still feel their work contributes to helping youth avoid these behaviours. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that understandings of PYD can vary, as can the ways in which the model is implemented. For example, the BGC Ottawa focuses on life skill development while both the JA and AWG focus on the connections participants develop (with teammates, participants from other delegations or contingents, volunteers, etc.) while trying out, training for and competing. With the JA, the connections center around the (construction of and maintenance of the) Francophone community while at the AWG, the connections centre around building relationships with others in the North, in order to counteract the remoteness of that geographical area and to recognize and celebrate Indigenous culture. Additionally, our results remind us that it is important to recognize that understandings of PYD can change based on cultural relevancy. For example, Strachan et al., (2018)'s work on how Indigenous youth position themselves with respect to PYD principles elucidates that not everyone understands and uses PYD principles in the same ways.

### **Suggested Paths Forward**

1. **Continue to talk about** (at the board level, at the young and established leader level, and at the participant level), **train leaders and deliver programs and events rooted in positive youth development.**
2. **Encourage reflexivity** (at all levels) **with respect to helping children and youth build life skills that will help them become active members of society.**

## Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD)

### What Is It?

While all three organizations seem to be successfully incorporating PYD into their programs, and while PYD has been (and continues to be the development model most frequently) used by sport scholars and practitioners, increasingly, researchers working both in and outside of sport (e.g., Camire et al., 2022; Coakley, 2002, 2011, 2016; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Iwasaki et al., 2014; Ronkainen et al., 2021) and government-funded agencies and programs (e.g., Canadian Centre for the Ethics in Sport) are calling for a rethinking of PYD because the approach does not take into consideration aspects related to “power, privilege, and oppression on young people’s development and lived experiences” (Gonzalez et al., 2020, p. 25). Furthermore, some sport scholars (e.g., Coakley, 2011; Camire et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2022; Ronkainen et al., 2021) argue that not only do PYD-based youth sport programs neglect to take into consideration power, privilege and oppression, they actually promote a neoliberal agenda where young people are socialized to be compliant, productive, and employable by learning life skills that are deemed economically productive in the current system. In this approach, children and youth are only viewed as community assets if their behaviours “fit within the current social norms and values” (Newman et al., 2022 p. 236). Coakley (2011) further argued that in sport-for-development (SfD) programs, which often subscribe to the PYD approach,

positive development in most sport programs is *not* defined in terms of the need for social justice, rebuilding strong community-based social institutions, reestablishing the resource base of the communities where young people lived, or empowering young people to be effective agents of social change in their communities. Instead, development was defined in terms of providing socialization experiences that would maintain and extend opportunities for “privileged youth” or compensate for what was missing in the lives of “disadvantaged youth” (p. 313).

We recognize that the BCG Ottawa, JA and AWG are not SfD programs and events, but rather youth development endeavours, however, we feel aspects of Coakley’s (2011) assessment may pertain to them, as well. While researchers (e.g., Coakley, 2011; Darnell & Millington, 2018; and countless others) have argued that sport can serve as a setting for addressing social justice, whether through formalized SfD programs or through community programs, scholars critical of the PYD approach suggest reaching beyond PYD frameworks to achieve this and instead draw more heavily on frameworks that take into consideration social justice (e.g., Camire et al., 2022).

One of these frameworks is SJYD. Iwasaki et al. (2014), explain that

“where PYD stresses providing youth with meaningful opportunities to promote competencies leading to positive youth development outcomes, SJYD enables youth to think critically about the social, economic and political conditions that impact their lives and then to engage in actions to address these conditions” (p. 327).

According to Camire et al. (2022), “social justice is often described as too nebulous and too versatile to be constricted to a single concept” (p. 1062). However, for the purposes of this report, we define social justice as the philosophical belief that all people deserve equal rights and opportunities and acting on these beliefs requires purposeful attempts at assessing and challenging systems and sociopolitical forces that determine what opportunities (or lack of opportunities) are available to people. Darnell and Millington (2018) suggest that sport **can** serve as a space for addressing issues related to social justice.

SJYD focuses on three levels (Iwasaki et al., 2014) - the self<sup>21</sup>, community<sup>22</sup>, and global awareness<sup>23</sup> – to encourage critical thinking and awareness in youth. Programs and events using a SJYD approach thus provide children and youth with critical thinking opportunities that challenge their perceptions of the conditions that impact their lives, while at the same time providing them opportunities to take action to change these conditions. McDaniel (2017) summarized the steps of the SJYD approach as (a) exploring identity to understand and think critically about systems of oppression, (b) creating unity among differences, and (c) working together (adults and young people) “to take action towards dismantling systems of oppression” (p.145). They further noted that adults play an important role in SJYD and “in order to do this work successfully, adults must first interrogate their own motivations for engaging in social justice work with youth” (p. 136).<sup>24</sup>

The SJYD approach is starting to gain traction in practice. For example, policy documents and programming of Canadian organizations involved with advocating for community sport with a focus on youth development, such as Jumpstart, MLSE Launchpad, and Their Opportunity, talk about aspects of the approach, without using the SJYD label. References to equity, diversity and inclusion are present, such as in Their Opportunities’ “Hear my Voice” program pillar, which “engage[s] participants in meaningful and peaceful conversation about diversity in our communities” (Their Opportunity, 2024, Hear My Voice section, para. 2).

## How Does It Emerge?

We found evidence of SJYD in the work of our community partners, as well. For example, leaders from the BGC Ottawa reflected on their own identity positions and the identities of the youth they work with, a crucial step in the SJYD model, according to McDaniel (2017). When asked about the backgrounds of BGC Ottawa members, young and established leaders often responded that children and youth from socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or racialized families were the organization’s target population. Furthermore, when asked about the training they receive, young leader, Alexei, explained that:

One time we had, last year, I think, we had a Syrian refugee spokesperson come in and just really with what’s going on, it’s really important, especially how Canada is so diverse, especially Ottawa.

That Alexei remembered and spoke positively about this specific training activity shows that he is open to considering his identity position and those of the BGC Ottawa members and views such reflexivity as important.

Established leader, Darryl, spoke about social class:

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<sup>21</sup> Awareness of self “involves developing a critical self-awareness of how power and privilege intersect with sex, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, etc. that create or constrain their life opportunities” (Iwasaki et al., 2014, p. 322).

<sup>22</sup> Awareness of community “involves developing awareness of oppressive forces in their community (e.g., how social and economic conditions that contextualize young people’s lives contribute to the fracturing of their identities), including racist policies and procedures, fracturing of identities” (Iwasaki et al., 2014, p. 322).

<sup>23</sup> Awareness of others (global) “involves looking at both oppression and opportunities for solidarity at a global scale” (Iwasaki et al., 2014, p. 322).

<sup>24</sup> Of note – while we have chosen to include SJYD in this research, we acknowledge that other scholars and practitioner are writing about and implementing a similar approach, Critical Positive Youth Development (CPYD) (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2024). CPYD bridges PYD with critical theory, with the goal of considering “the role and impact of power, privilege, and oppression on young people’s development and lived experiences” in the PYD process first set out by Lerner (Gonzalez et al., 2020, p. 24). Like in SJYD, there are three steps in CPYD, which include critical reflection (similar to exploring identity in SJYD), political efficacy (belief that one can change social conditions, different that SJYD’s second step, which is come to a consensus with adults as to how to make changes) and critical action (similar to the action step in SJYD). We recommend that scholars compare the two models to determine what differences there are between them (if any) and present the most effective model to researchers, practitioners, governments, funders, etc. who can then focus on that model in their youth development work. Until then, we recommend using SJYD.

I recognize and I work, and so does everybody else in this organization, with families that once you get to know their situations and stories, **you realize what fantastic families and people they are. The only difference is, is their economic [situation], you know?**

Another young leader reframed the assertion that the Club is for those who are socioeconomically challenged by suggesting that all youth are “at-risk” and claimed that the club is an important place for everyone. This reframing shows an awareness that power, privilege, and oppression has many faces and can impact young people’s development and lived experiences in a variety of ways.

Established leader, Ahmed, suggested that all youth should come to the Club, despite the fear some (read: middle-class white) people have with respect to diversity, because experiencing a diverse environment is beneficial for all:

Ahmed: I was talking about your kid, because I'm not blinded by certain things. The Boys and Girls Club, as you probably saw when you go downstairs, it's majorly from certain ethnic group or...

Christine: Racialized group.

Ahmed: Racialized group. I know that these neighbourhoods are not consistent and doesn't reflect the kids that we have downstairs. So, what does that tell you? There's fear...But if I was, to advise you, I'm not 100 per cent sure, and now you're doubting me. **But what I'm saying is there's a lot of fear in Ottawa, in society. Even in Toronto, even though it's very mixed, is “I don't want to send my kid here because of these groups, right? And I don't trust all these.” I would advise those people: “Give the Boys and Girls Club a try and maybe your kid, I know your kid will love it, but then they would benefit from it.”** You know what I mean?

Christine: They would benefit from the diversity and hanging out with all kinds of people...

Ahmed: Diversity, absolutely, absolutely.

According to Ahmed, the Club supports a variety of identity positions and youth derive benefits from being part of such a diverse community. While PYD stresses providing youth with meaningful opportunities to promote competencies leading to positive youth development outcomes, SJYD enables “youth to think critically about the social, economic and political conditions that impact their lives and then to engage in actions to address these conditions (Iwasaki et al., 2014, p. 327). SJYD involves looking at both oppression and opportunity for solidarity, which does fit the BCG Ottawa’s purpose of producing “good citizens” and “community leaders.” That some young and established leaders are aware of aspects related to the social, economic and political realities of members and workers, and explicitly discussed these in the interviews, suggests that they are interrogating their motivations for engaging in social justice work with youth and may be employing aspects of SJYD in their work.

SJYD is also apparent in both SJA institutional documents and through conversations with young and established leaders. For example, the SJA’s mission is:

*to develop the JA movement in order to contribute to the vitality of Francophone youth in the Atlantic provinces through sports competitions and cultural activities. (Société des Jeux de l'Acadie, Status et reglements, 2019, p. 1)*

and the SJA :

*visé à être reconnu comme un organisme modèle pour le développement de la jeunesse, de la langue française et de la culture acadienne. (Société des Jeux de l'Acadie, Status et règlements, 2019, p. 1)*

There is a purposeful political (and social justice seeking) agenda to the JA, which is to address the struggle for cultural and linguistic reproduction and take action to ensure that the Francophone Acadian community lives on. Young and established leaders attempt to achieve this by educating participants about the struggles the Francophone Acadian community has endured, celebrating their determination to maintain their culture, but also by increasing the visibility of the community through the very staging of the large-scale sports and cultural event. According to Lamarre (2000), by increasing its visibility, a minority is asserting the right to exist and grow without interference. The JA are just this – an event that encourage Francophone Acadians to assert their cultural identity through their increased visibility at the event itself, in the community in which the event is hosted, as well as through local, provincial and national media. Young leader Martin claimed that he “gives back” to the JA because he enjoys watching participants experience this visibility at the opening ceremonies, which he feels develops a sense of belonging, and the impetus to remain in the region and keep the community going:

Martin: Ça serait voir les jeunes de 5e, 6e à la 10e année quand c'est l'ouverture des Jeux de l'Acadie puis ils lèvent le drapeau puis la flamme est levée, puis tu vois des jeunes de 5e, 6e année avec des larmes qui coulent, ça - ça vaut pas mal cher. Ça veut juste dire que la culture de tous ces jeunes-là sont encore vraiment, vraiment fiers, ça c'est impressionnant à voir. Oui. Ça fait que ça c'est vraiment, juste le sport, ça peut être mis de côté. **Juste la culture francophone acadienne qui est présente aux Jeux, c'est ça qui fait garder tous les Acadiens dans la région. Si les Jeux de l'Acadie n'existaient pas, je suis vraiment confiant qu'il y aurait moins de jeunes qui resteraient par ici.** Ça crée vraiment un sentiment d'appartenance, oui. C'est vraiment fort.

Christine: C'est pour ça que tu continues?

Martin: C'est probablement pour ça que je continue, oui.

Martin's comment suggests that through the opening ceremonies, the JA provide participating youth with critical thinking opportunities that challenge their perceptions of the conditions that impact their lives while at the same time providing them an opportunity to take action to change these conditions through the construction of sense of belonging and the desire to stay in their region and continue to fight for Francophone Acadian rights. This addresses McDaniel's (2017) first step for SJYD. Another young leader, Séraphine, speaks about the how participants are given the chance to learn about and engage in the collective action for francophone rights while at the JA, and suggests that by engaging in this civic action, participants strengthen the Acadian community:

Séraphine: C'est comme j'ai dit, c'est parce que c'est l'Acadie, ça fait 39 ans qu'on fait cette Finale-là. C'est fou de penser que... **C'est une bataille ça là.** On ne se bat peut-être pas comme Louis J. Robichaud ou comme Louis Mailloux. Est-ce qu'on décèdera pour les Jeux de l'Acadie? Probablement pas, je ne le pense pas. **Mais on a quand même besoin de se prouver. Je pense que c'est ça qui est la force de la communauté acadienne francophone qu'on a ici. On est capable de démontrer que, *sure*, nos élèves pourraient repartir jouer à tous ces sports en anglais, c'est tout disponible. Mais là, ils ont la chance de non seulement pratiquer le sport**

**qu'ils aiment, mais ils ont la chance de continuer à tisser leur communauté acadienne.**

Je pense que c'est ce qui fait que les Jeux de l'Acadie sont tellement importants. Parce qu'on aurait pu abandonner il y a de cela 39 ans. Ils auraient pu ne pas créer ceci, tu sais? Mais voir des communautés comme Fredericton qui l'a accueilli l'an passé, puis il y en a plein, même quand ça arrive à des places comme Caraquet, c'est quand même impressionnant de voir que la communauté se rallie comme ça puis travaille tellement fort.

Young leader Vanessa speaks about how impressive it is that, compared to over sport championships, an event like the JA can inspire young people to want to continue to be part of the Acadian community, despite the challenges they will inevitably face.

Christine: Puis tu m'as dit qu'il y a rien comme les Jeux de l'Acadie.

Vanessa: Non [dans d'autres tournois sportifs], tu compétitionnes, puis oui, tu te fais des connaissances et puis tout ça, mais c'est quand même la grande rivalité puis quand la compétition finit, puis ça finit là puis tu veux gagner. Les Jeux de l'Acadie c'est beaucoup plus un événement. Au bout de la ligne tout le monde est là pour célébrer l'Acadie dans le milieu sportif, dans le fond. Ça fait que je pense que tout le monde a ce but en tête.

Puis non, l'ambiance est différente que si des fois mettons un tournoi national. C'est complètement deux mondes différents. Ça fait que je pense que c'est cet environnement, comme je ne me suis jamais dit : « ah, je veux absolument les « coacher » au tournoi national un jour de ma vie », mais je me suis dit que j'aimerais « coacher » dans les Jeux de l'Acadie. **Non, je trouve que c'est impressionnant à quel point un événement comme ça peut inspirer les jeunes de vouloir continuer à faire partie de ce monde-là puis de cette société-là.**

Perhaps even more clearly than the BGC Ottawa leaders, both young and established leaders from the JA identify their own identity positions and those of JA participants and suggest that the Games provide an environment that opens the door for participants to engage in the struggle for cultural and linguistic reproduction.

Like the BGC Ottawa and JA, young and established AWG leaders also applied some facets of SJYD. For example, some leaders, such as established leader Constance, were reflexive about their own identity positions and the identities of the youth they are working with.

Yeah, I think so. I think we, especially like as a host society, understand how important it is to give this experience to people who might, this would be their only experience, that we know the responsibility of executing these Games for someone who this might be their only time travelling, might be their only time leaving their home, their hometown and really understanding that this experience may also catapult the rest of someone's life, like myself, and what that turns into for an individual and for their future. So, it definitely is on our mind. **It's not just thinking about what they're going to eat for lunch and how they're going to play basketball. Like it's a lot more than that. I think we know for sure, especially if you had experience and history**

with these Games, and you are someone who's either been impacted or you know someone who's been impacted, it's not lost on you like the responsibility that we have not to just put on a sport and cultural competition.

Constance acknowledges, here, that the remoteness of living in the North comes with fewer opportunities and extra costs. Furthermore, when asked about whether the AWG have a social responsibility towards the communities they serve, established leader Colette responded:

Absolutely. Absolutely. **Every contingent is responsible for making, for giving anybody who can the opportunity to attend and go to these Games.** One of Alaska's goals is to get as many rural athletes off-of-the-road system to be part of the Arctic Winter Games.

Young leader, Shania answered the same question:

Um, yeah, I would say so. Like I'm not sure if this is what you're getting at, but I'm thinking of a host community. **I think that they need to ask their community members or their chiefs if it's okay to host it in the first place prior to it happening to make sure that their members are able to experience the Games.** I just think about if the Games happened in Yellowknife, we have a large homelessness issue, so I would wonder would our community accommodate them or ask them to relocate, which I would be very against and disappointed in. So, yeah, I think that if you're inviting people to come to your home, your community, that your members should be taken care of first and that you are a guest coming into the community.

Both Colette and Shania's acknowledgements that the Games are about inclusivity (with respect to who should attend, who should be included in decisions to host) suggest they are thinking at the "awareness of community" level, which is necessary for SJYD.

When asked if training takes place to help the leaders interrogate their own identities, established leader Constance claimed:

Yeah, so **we actually have an equity and inclusion committee.** They facilitate inclusion training. We as a host society have all taken formal cultural awareness training and our municipality actually offers free cultural awareness training to anybody who wants it virtually. **So, we promote the idea of cultural awareness training to all of our volunteers.**

Mairin, an established leader involved with the Games that were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic explained how her team trained (mostly) established leaders:

Christine: how does one train them or make them aware of the specificity of these Northern Games that one doesn't want to lose?

Mairin: Well, we went on the path of reconciliation and what they were here to learn and for their professional and personal development as well. And I did sort of harp on that a lot, that they all had a responsibility as privileged folks from big cities to come up here and learn from living in the North. And, yes, it's all unique and kind of cool and stuff, but it is not, if you don't accept it or if you don't see the societal issues along with like reconciliation.... Yeah, we did blanket exercise quite a few times. We did smudging. We smudged the office when we first moved in. We did another repeat smudge later. We had smudges when the Games were cancelled. We had a part of

the Reconciliation Action Plan. We had button blankets being sewn. We had three. They were brought into the office and everyone had a chance, an opportunity to stitch and sit around and stitch. It was quite beautiful. We served a traditional... you know, had bannock and tea at some events instead of pizza or whatever. We played hand games. Yeah, we went to harvest camps like for some of the people that were on part of the Reconciliation Action Plan sent them out to harvest camps. Our mascot had an Indigenous name and went on community tours, gave the opportunity to people to go up to Old Crow, which is like completely top of the Yukon, only fly-in community. People like southerners made sure they got on the plane to go up. Yeah, those are just some examples. We also had our inclusion policy that we had some individuals of the community from the LGBTQ2S+ community working with us as members of staff and explaining to us how life was, their lived experience was. We did a lot of classes on that as well and did our best to understand other people's lived experience.

**Christine: And what is one thing you want everyone involved with the Games to embrace and reflect?**

**Mairin: Well, I think the two words I would like to, for it to sort of live by, is equity, like equitable and reconciliation.** And of course that is going to mean something different to everybody, but that's all a part of life as well, right?...Yeah, so it manifests and it takes a long time. I would, I guess my message would be that to take the things in, but like don't expect to understand it all right away. It's going to take some time as you develop as a human being.

According to Constance and Mairin, training activities for the AWG thus attempt to get leaders thinking about (and acting on) social justice issues. This focus on reflexivity around power, privilege and oppression and commitment to social justice for Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+ and other equity owed communities arguably filters down to the youth, if not explicitly through messaging from contingent leaders and coaches, implicitly through the cultural aspects presented at the AWG and the inclusive nature of the event. The staging of the 2023 Games clearly and ostensibly put Indigenous communities and cultures at the forefront of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the Cultural Gala, Cultural Pop-ups, and throughout the sociocultural programming of the Games including at the Indigenous Sport Gallery showcasing the history of Aboriginal athletes. Furthermore, local Indigenous communities were involved with the Games and participated in them. In addition, three special Truth and Reconciliation pins were produced and distributed at events honouring Truth and Reconciliation. These pins included the Orange Shirt pin, created to raise awareness about residential schools' tragic legacy, the Red Dress pin, created to raise awareness about violence against Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people and the TRC pin, featuring the Seven Sacred Teachings (which the Host Society adopted as their guiding principles) and moccasins (which represented walking towards reconciliation and fully supporting and respecting calls 87 and 91 – Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 10). Established leaders (e.g., Mairin) claim that meaningful discussions continue to take place at the AWGIC level (and perhaps other levels) regarding the responsibility to incorporate Truth and Reconciliation (including Calls to Action) into the AWG. That many of the leaders were prompted to be reflexive of their own identity positions and those of participants, an important first step identified by McDaniel, suggests that some aspects of SJYD are happening at the AWG.

### **Implications for Sport Program Delivery**

We previously mentioned that SJYD, which builds youth's self-awareness of how class, gender, race, ethnicity, and other dimensions of power affect their lives and contribute to the root causes of both local and global challenges (see Camire et al, 2022; Iwasaki et al., 2014) is becoming valued in youth sport

settings. Scholars (see Coakley, 2011; Camire et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2019) emphasize the importance of challenging structural inequities while engaging in youth development work, rather than just attempting and/or claiming to help youth facing challenges because of language, culture, socio-economic, geographic and/or other conditions find their way in the current system. While the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG seem to be milieus in which PYD is taking place, they are also places in which some aspects of SJYD are taking place. Volunteers and workers in all three organizations claim to be interrogating their own motivations and identities and acknowledging the power, privilege (or lack thereof) and oppression constraining participants – a good start to working through the SJYD steps outlined by McDaniel (2017). Some interview participants, like AWG established leader Theresa, who commented about hoping to instill responsibility, accountability and sacrifice through her work with AWG participants, want to promote a greater awareness and consciousness among young and established leaders, which may then filter down to participants. In the case of the AWG, we acknowledge that (white) privileged people occupy many of the established leader positions (e.g., Chefs de Mission and contingent leader positions), and while interview participants in these positions had a different mix of communities to which they felt they were giving back to, there was a true concern and at least effort by most to ensure that all children and youth (including equity owed youth) have access to the AWG. Importantly, we suggest this is not happening solely at the AWG – BGC Ottawa and JA young and established leaders also seemed to support the notion that children and youth who face challenges because of language, culture, socio-economic and/or geographic conditions should have access to the programs and events. These leaders' responses correlate with Basok et al's (2002) view that peoples' primary motivations for contributing to community projects are often related to social justice values.

The time thus seems right for all three organizations to continue to push forward with a focus on SJYD. However, before doing so, the organizations must ask themselves – is this something we want to add to our missions? Santos (2022) states that “sport systems need to clearly define if social justice is a process and an outcome aligned with their mission, principles and motivations and weigh the positive and negative consequences (p. 4).” Or is this something we are not yet ready to do? Furthermore, research (see Einfeld & Collins, 2008) suggests that educating community project leaders on social justice issues is crucial for pushing those agendas forward. It would be fruitful, then for our community partners to host discussions about social justice with their leaders, and, of course, with their participants, as well. We did not get much of a sense of whether the youth workers (BGC Ottawa), coaches and mission staff (JA and AWG) are talking to members or participants about these things? If not, could they?

If the BGC Ottawa, JA and/or AWG choose to have social justice as part of the process, each organization will have unique work to do. For example, for the BGC Ottawa this might mean educating their leaders about poverty, diversity, inclusivity, etc., and incorporating thinking opportunities about these aspects into their programming. For the SJA (and affiliates), this might mean educating their leaders about Acadian history and the need to keep fighting for their rights (we acknowledge they are already doing some of this) and continuing their work promoting this advocacy piece with participants. For the AWGIC (and affiliates), this might mean educating all of their leaders (including coaches and mission staff from all delegations) about Indigenous issues, continuing to advocate that athletes, volunteers, and workers consider their positionality within the community, and carry on working towards reconciliation. Part of this might mean addressing the belief shared by some, that in theory, everyone (in particular, Indigenous children and youth) should get the opportunity to attend the AWG. Throughout our conversations with AWG leaders, we were struck by the consistent consideration of Indigenous issues and the pride interview participants exuded that these issues are being (partly) addressed through the inclusion of the Dene Games, Arctic sports, cultural aspects of ceremonies, etc. but we were also surprised that this consideration sometimes fizzled out with respect to selecting athletes. A few leaders (e.g., established leaders Mairin and Keagan) spoke to this point and it was clear that a tension remains between sports development and youth development, like in the Canadian Francophone Games (see Dallaire 2003b). However, we acknowledge that at the AWG, each contingent is self-governing with their own objectives (unlike the governance structure of the delegations of the JA, which are created by the SJA) and the governance of some contingents partnering with sport associations for athlete selection

does not easily lend itself to focusing on social justice and equity. Therefore, to ensure more inclusion of Indigenous participants, mission staff might have to raise awareness among their sport associations partners to ensure that they at least provide opportunities for children and youth in remote communities (who want to participate – some Indigenous children and youth actively refuse to participate in euro-Canadian sport – young leader Ree spoke to this, also see Nachman et al., 2022) to try out. But even then, trying out may not be enough – if they do not have access to the same type of facilities or opportunities offered in the larger communities, prospective participants may not have the skills to be selected. Until sport associations buy into the “sport for all” philosophy, we expect the AWGIC and/or the leaders of the contingents will continue to be challenged with respect to recruitment and selection of Indigenous athletes while attempting to address issues around Truth and Reconciliation. On this note, it is crucial for the AWGIC (and affiliates) to continue thinking about the place Truth and Reconciliation calls to action should play in future editions of the AWG. Care should be taken, though, to ensure that the Truth and Reconciliation calls to action on sport do not, as Greely and Arellano (2023) suggest “reproduce a logic of social inclusion, one which assimilates Indigenous athletes and Peoples into settler models of sport” (p. 432). Greely and Arellano (2023) claim that “these calls to action are focused on the inclusion of Indigenous athletes and communities into settler sport models rather than a revision of settler understandings of sport through integrating Indigenous worldviews. In this regard, the TRC’s calls to action do not invite a reimagining of a settler model of sport; they simply call for including—or, rather, assimilating—Indigenous athletes within it.” (p. 432). If they are seeking to work towards social justice, we invite those involved with the AWG to, as Greely and Arellano (2023) recommend, “radically reimagine sport by meaningfully integrating Indigenous epistemologies within it” (p. 432), or continue doing so, if they are already on this path.

While steps could be taken over time, if the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC want to enact a SJYD model in their work, ultimately, a commitment to a perpetual rethinking of their sport structures and a refashioning of aspects of their programs and events as well as how they select and train their volunteers and staff would be required. As Camire et al. (2022) state “instead of trying to fit social justice agendas into market-driven youth sport structures, perhaps a rethinking of organized youth sport may be warranted for alternative modes of human movement to at least be acknowledged as offering worthwhile opportunities to promote social justice” (p. 1072). At the same time, we acknowledge that, in practice, there is a messiness to all this youth development theory and attempts to use aspects of the SJYD model we presented should be considered, while still enacting the PYD already working for current sport program delivery. In fact, a blended model might be best (see Iwasaki, 2016).

### **Suggested Paths Forward**

1. **Talk about SJYD** at the board level, at the young and established leader level, and at the participant level
2. **Incorporate SJYD principles into leader training programs**
3. **Incorporate SJYD principles, where possible**
4. **Accept and discuss the “messiness”** that comes with putting **youth development models** and theory into practice
5. **Encourage reflexivity** (at all levels) **with respect to social justice**

## Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE)

### What Is It?

While PYD and SJYD (and the call to move from PYD to SJYD approaches) have been explored by scholars in a multitude of disciplines, particularly by those working in psychology related fields, and have been employed by sport practitioners (especially PYD), another approach, Critical Youth Empowerment (CYE) has been proposed for use by researchers and practitioners working in sociocultural studies of sport (see Kope & Arellano, 2016). Where PYD stresses teaching skills and competencies that help youth integrate into their communities as they are, and SJYD focuses on helping youth think critically about their lives and begin the process of challenging systems of privilege and oppression within their communities and globally,

CYE encompasses those processes and contexts through which youth engage in actions that create change in organizational, institutional, and societal policies, structures, values, norms, and images. CYE builds on, integrates, and expands existing conceptual models of youth development and youth empowerment. The aim of CYE is to support and foster youth contributions to positive community development and sociopolitical change, resulting in youth who are critical citizens, actively participating in the day-to-day building of stronger, more equitable communities” (Jennings et al, 2006, p. 40).

Thus, where youth development (both PYD and SJYD) is centered on developing the capacity of the individual youth (including the capacity to effect societal change in the case of SJYD), CYE is focused on creating greater community change through the meaningful sharing of power by all those involved. CYE and SJYD share an emphasis on adult-youth partnerships, personal reflection on sociopolitical processes and active participation in processes to make change. CYE goes further because of the focus on meaningful and equitable power-sharing between youth and adults. Thus, youth have a say in how they want to structure organizations and events, or even whether they think they should exist at all. For an organization to offer CYE experiences, Jennings et al., 2006 suggests that these dimensions are required:

- ✓ A welcoming and safe environment
- ✓ Meaningful participation and engagement
- ✓ Equitable power-sharing between youth and adults
- ✓ Engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes
- ✓ Participation in sociopolitical processes to effect change
- ✓ Integrated individual- and community-level empowerment

In theory, these dimensions seem plausible for organizations offering programs and events that focus on youth development. However, in practice, extensive work is required to shift the ways in which we define, organize and think about sport in order to move into a situation in which CYE can occur. This was evident from our conversations with the BCG Ottawa, JA and AWG leaders.

### How Does It Emerge?

Some facets of CYE were obvious from our interviews with BGC Ottawa leaders. The first two facets, a welcoming and safe environment and meaningful participation and engagement came up regularly. Engagement in reflexivity on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes (part of SJYD, as discussed above, and in the quote by Ahmed), was also occasionally present. Other aspects, including equitable power-sharing between youth and adults, participation in sociopolitical processes to effect change (also part of SJYD) and integrated individual- and community-level empowerment (also part of SJYD) were not evident. Some young leaders were enacting shared leadership, however, which is arguably an antecedent for CYE. For example, according to established leader Darryl:

I'll give you a great example. We have a young fellow in here right now. A[ndrew] is his name. A[ndrew] grew up through the club. A[ndrew] was a little boy when I was here back in the 90s. Now he's a young adult and doing very well and still works for us. A[ndrew] has a Friday night program for intermediate boys and girls. Okay, so that's the 11- to 13-year-olds, and it's a basketball league. And it is hugely popular. But the things that make it special, so on a Friday evening you'll see these kids rolling in. They're all excited. They want to play. **But what A[ndrew] has done, and I think this is the Boys and Girls Club again kind of shining through, he has his older guys coaching the teams. He has his older people doing the score clock. He has youth refereeing the games. It's all supported with youth that are all 14, 15, 16 years old.**

There's the magic right there. Those kids are having those opportunities that they wouldn't normally have. They're feeling a real sense of pride. They're coaching a team. They're refereeing a game. They're learning all of those great skills. And A[ndrew], you know, we didn't... Again, right, this was something that we... I mean running basketball leagues is nothing new to us, but **involving the youth to that extent is really impressive.**

And I wouldn't expect that from very many youth workers, but I almost expect it coming from a person who grew up at the club because they just got that. He knows what it was like when he was 14, 15. And when the youth workers said: "Hey, A[ndrew], you want to help me out here? You want to put this away for me?" That kind of thing, right? He gets it so well that this is how he's built his whole league. And it really is quite impressive to see how quickly they get set up. The games are organized and the kids are playing, and they run through, I don't know, at least three games through the evening on a Friday night, and the kids couldn't be more excited to come in and play.

Exemplifying Darryl's account, young leader Andrew explained that he actively seeks input from members to provide programming that meets their needs:

I figured **I learned the basketball thing because I sat and talked with the older kids and I said: What do you guys want?** And they're like, "well, we want to play full court". I said: "Okay, what do you want in full court?" And then I just sat and talked to them, and they didn't say stats or anything. They just said: "Oh well, I want to make teams. Maybe we can get teams or something up there." And I said: "Okay, well I'll see what I can do."

Andrew's willingness to seek input and share leadership with members suggests that the BGC Ottawa seems to be providing leaders with an environment conducive for enacting CYE principles, and some leaders are doing so in some instances, which bodes well for the future. That there is an expectation from youth workers that members help from a young age (as referenced by Darryl and many other leaders), even a little bit, also suggests an environment in which CYE may be occurring or could occur. Of note, the BGC Ottawa runs two leadership programs for members: Torch Club (for ages 10-13), in which "members plan their own programming based on the issues important to them", and Leaders 4 Life (for ages 14-18), "a program for teens that builds character and develops the next generation of young leaders in our city" (BGC Ottawa, 2024). Torch Club strikes us as having shared leadership components already incorporated given members can build their own program.

As with the BGC Ottawa, aspects of CYE were present in the JA interview conversations. For example, the JA seemed to provide youth with a welcoming and safe environment, meaningful participation and engagement and engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes, through the opening and closing ceremonies. Equitable power sharing between youth and adults, though not present, did come up within discussions about the “La Relève” (translated “The Next Generation”) program, which was initiated in the 1980s (although modified in 2018) and includes “mini chefs”, “youth media” and “youth coach” components. Established leader Marie-Hélène explains that in the mini-chef program:

Ils vont passer une demi-journée avec une équipe sportive, avec un entraîneur, ils vont coucher avec cette équipe-là pour voir c'est quoi l'expérience de coucher puis d'entraîner une équipe pour une demi-journée aux Jeux. **Ils vont passer vraiment comme du « hands on »** puis ce qu'on encourage, c'est quand même quelque chose qui est nouveau qu'on est en train de développer puis que ça s'ajoute.

For the “mini chef” program, one youth from each delegation is chosen to shadow a chef de mission and/or other established leaders from their delegation throughout the Finals and contribute to the organization of the contingent. For the “youth media” program, one youth from each delegation is chosen to shadow media personnel and create their own media, and for the “youth coach” program, one youth from each delegation is chosen to shadow the coaches and help with the teams. Through “The Next Generation” program, the JA is attempting to prepare youth for leadership positions within the Acadian community and society at large, a good step if the organizations involved with the JA want to consider equitable power sharing in the future. Participation in sociopolitical processes to effect change and integrated individual- and community-level empowerment did not explicitly surface from the interviews. However, it is worth mentioning that the JA used to have a distinct leadership program that has changed over time, and may have addressed these aspects, but it was not included in the data collection for this project. That the JA has offered such a leadership program, and currently offers “The Next Generation” program may have an impact on the extent to which CYE can emerge.

Again, like the BGC Ottawa and JA, aspects of CYE were present in the interview conversations with AWG leaders. For example, the AWG seemed to provide youth with a welcoming and safe environment, meaningful participation and engagement and engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes, through the cultural events and activities as well as the pin trading. At the AWGIC and Host Society levels, leaders seemed engaged in this critical reflection. Importantly, though, the extent to which youth participants have the potential to be engaged in this critical reflection varied between contingents (each contingent placed a different level of value on critical reflection). Equitable power sharing between youth and adults, participation in sociopolitical processes to effect change and integrated individual- and community-level empowerment did not explicitly surface from the interviews. Of note, the AWG is an event for children and youth, run by adults, that changes location each edition, so there is arguably less opportunity for shared leadership programs to be offered than in other youth programs. Still, perhaps the AWG could look to the JA’s “mini chef”, “youth media” and “youth coach” programs for inspiration.

### **Implications for Sport Program Delivery**

Aspects of CYE were identified by leaders from all three community partners, particularly the welcoming and safe environment, meaningful participation and engagement and engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes. Equitable power sharing between youth and adults, was not identified by leaders of the BGC Ottawa, JA or AWG, although there were some programs discussed (e.g., Torch Club from the BGC Ottawa; “The Next Generation”, JA) that partially address this power sharing. As mentioned in our introduction, many leaders interviewed favour horizontal and collaborative governance rather than centralized, hierarchical decision-making, which suggests an openness to equitable power

sharing at all levels. Participation in sociopolitical processes to effect change and integrated individual- and community-level empowerment did not explicitly surface from the interviews of any of the leaders.

That many of the young and established leaders from all organizations were previous members or participants bodes well for further implementation of CYE. Hoekman et al. (2019) suggest that former youth members or participants who are re-engaged in new roles as volunteers or staff members can play important leadership roles “in taking the organization forward by unfreezing deeply held attitudes and beliefs” (p. 620). Having shared leadership processes in place would enable their voices, and those of current members and participants, to have a platform to contribute to the future direction of the organization. (Svenson, Jones and Kang, 2021).

## **Suggested Paths Forward**

1. **Talk about critical youth empowerment** at the board level, at the young and established leader level, and at the participant level
2. **Incorporate CYE into leader training programs**
3. **Could the BCG Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC (and affiliates) try to get more power sharing happening** by encouraging young and established leaders to involve members and participants in decision-making (i.e., create youth-adult partnerships)?
4. **Could all three organizations try to share some aspects of power in organizational, planning, and staging processes of events?** For example, could youths be integrated on boards and/or committees organizing the activities and events? Could this be incorporated into organizational policies?
5. **Encourage reflexivity** (at all levels) **with respect to youth empowerment**

In addition to PYD, SJYD and CYE, we propose two more concepts that expand our reading of how the leaders understood their work: servant leadership and the Capabilities Approach (CA).

## Servant Leadership

### What Is It?

The concept of servant leadership, first proposed by Greenleaf (1977), has been used in many fields, including education, business, management and economics. Its application in sport, specifically sport for development and peace (SDP) (see Welty Peachy & Burton, 2017) is what led us to consider it for this project. Servant leadership is described by Greenleaf (1977) as follows:

*It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first... The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test... Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (p. 13)*

Servant leaders help leadership grow by sharing power with others in an organization, showing self-awareness and fostering the same quality in others, thinking critically about their actions and encouraging others to follow suit, providing support to others and showing them that they are part of something much larger than themselves. Servant leaders are those that can successfully enact SJYD and/or CYE. The antecedent qualities (virtuous traits) required for servant leadership behaviour include humility, altruism, gratitude and forgiveness (Welty Peachy & Burton, 2017). The behaviours of a servant leader include empowering and developing people, authenticity, providing direction and stewardship (Welty Peachy & Burton, 2017). According to van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015), empowerment “stands for giving autonomy to followers to perform tasks, developing their talent and letting them engage in effective self-leadership” (p. 126). Authenticity refers to “being true to oneself, accurately representing— privately and publicly—internal states, intentions and commitments” (p. 126). Providing direction is when “leaders make sure that followers know what is expected of them” (p. 126-127) and stewardship is “an awareness of the responsibility for future generations and the contribution of an organization to society and the greater good” (p. 126). Upon completion of our participant interview analysis, we felt that many of the leaders from the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG referred to aspects of this leadership style, another indication that SJYD and CYE may be taking place, or could take place, in these milieus.

### How Does It Emerge?

An important action of a servant leader is empowering and developing people (Welty Peachy & Burton, 2017). There were examples of this kind of leadership at the BGC Ottawa, such as in Andrew's case mentioned above. In that quote, Andrew exhibits empowerment and possibly even stewardship. In another conversation, when asked about how he was trained, young leader Amil noted that the BGC Ottawa staff prepared him for his leadership role while he was a member, by empowering him:

Christine: And in what ways did your training, formal or informal at Boys and Girls Club, prepare you for the relationships with children and youth?

Amil: I think they prepared me immensely. The relationships I had with staff showed me that you can have a positive relationship with someone who's older than you, and it showed me that an older person can accept a younger person even though they're small and inexperienced. **So, the fact that they valued my voice and gave me the opportunity to speak, and they listened made me feel as though: “Hey, I can listen, and I can impact a youth, and a youth can also impact me as a worker just as much.”**

The second action outlined by Welty Peachy and Burton (2017), authenticity, was brought up in a few instances, as well. For example, when asked “*what kind of person do you want to be*”, some leaders explained that they want to be themselves. For example, in response to this question, young leader Anna stated that she wanted to be herself. When asked, by Christine, what that meant, she said:

**Being myself. I would say being myself means that I can talk about my... Well, I can talk about like things that are, for me, things that are normal, but for them would be different. So being able to talk about our differences I guess would be being myself.** So, if I'm saying this is what we do back home and I'm able to say that, express my culture and able to express the differences and being comfortable knowing that I'm not going to be ridiculed or marginalized for that. Yeah, I think that's what I think I mean when I say being myself. My personality's being, like everybody is able to accept my personality for, like accept me for the way that I am.

Young and established leaders also discussed the importance of providing direction to members while responding to the question “*what kind of person do you want to be*” and stewardship came up, as well, when interview participants suggested that they are aware that their leadership impacts younger people (other generations) and society. Young leaders Andrew and Salim speak to stewardship:

Andrew: ...and you know that when they become older you can't really see them succeed, but to know that you've given them all the things they need to go, you've given them everything that you could before they leave. **You've given them, you did your best to shape them and give them the best experience that they could at Boys and Girls Club and hope that they can take it to wherever they go after that.**

Salim: I think who I am is I'm a good, young person. I'm a hardworking, loving, caring person, and I just want the best for everyone around me, and I think I got a lot of my values from the Boys and Girls Club...I think I personally at my work right now, we've had a few really sad incidents that I will not say on this, but I impact a lot of really troubled kids and it's heartbreaking what their misconceptions are of when they're older what's going to happen to them...**I think what makes me a good person is the impact that I'm having on the kids' lives right now and how rewarding it feels.**

Andrew understands that his work contributes to the greater good, while Salim identifies that his experiences as a member of the BGC Ottawa helped him become who he is today – a leader helping the next generation. This brings us back to the “it factor” previously mentioned, in that Salim claims he (at least partially) developed the “it factor” as a member and now performs it in his role as a young leader.

Servant leadership was evident from our conversations with the leaders from the BGC Ottawa, and aspects of it were also present in the interviews with leaders from the JA. Empowerment appeared when established leader Marie-Hélène spoke about wanting others working for the Games to take on leadership roles when facing challenges:

C'est sûr qu'ils vont m'appeler des fois pour beaucoup de questions, pour beaucoup de choses, puis c'est sûr que je fais une gestion en général. Tu sais je ne veux pas qu'ils pensent que c'est moi qui veux tout décider non plus. On dirait qu'il y a cette perception qu'ils vont m'appeler, puis ils veulent que je fasse des décisions, **mais j'essaie de leur dire « voici nos règlements, voici comment ça se passe, mais tu sais je ne veux pas que ce soit juste moi. Je ne veux pas que ce soit moi qui dise non, je veux avoir votre contribution.**

This suggests that the SJA look to empower all leaders to find solutions to problems themselves, rather than rely on leaders in established positions to make tough calls. This philosophy of shared decisions making may filter down to participants, as well, and could in the future. Authenticity came up several times in our conversations with JA leaders. For example, when asked “*what kind of person do you want to be*”, young leader Victor explained that he was his authentic self at the Games and encouraged participants to be, too:

Donc j’essaie de montrer de « n’aie pas peur de sortir de ta zone de confort puis so *what* si le monde te juge? **Si toi t’es content avec qu’est-ce que tu fais puis t’aimes qu’est-ce que tu fais, c’est ça qui est l’important.** » Moi, je suis pour. C’est pour ça que je veux me mettre comme modèle, montrer à ces jeunes-là qu’ils peuvent faire qu’est-ce qu’ils veulent, qu’ils n’ont pas besoin d’avoir peur puis qu’ils ne craignent pas que c’est jugé.

Providing direction surfaced when young leader Martin spoke about coaching with firm expectations, while at the same time leaving space for spontaneity:

Puis on dirait je ne veux pas être l’entraîneur qui est « hop, hop, allez-y, c’est l’armée », mais quand même il y a une structure à suivre puis je veux... J’essaie vraiment de prendre le modèle de mes entraîneurs de soccer qui étaient **souples d’un côté mais rigides d’un autre**. Quand c’est le temps de faire quelque chose, il faut que ce soit fait. Mais quand on est dans une pratique puis que l’autre jour mon Jacob essaie de passer par-dessus la clôture puis il s’arrache tout le fond de culotte, on va rire puis on va avoir des beaux moments ensemble. Tu sais, c’est des choses comme ça, j’essaie de jouer mes deux cartes.

When asked the same question as Victor, “*what kind of person do you want to be*”, young leader Elianor demonstrated stewardship when she spoke about being a leader who participants feel good about being around, and commit to being like in the future:

Mais je dirais un leader parce que veut, veut pas, c’est des jeunes puis des jeunes ça absorbe vite. Je veux dire, moi je me rappelle quand j’étais jeune, quand tu regardes quelqu’un de plus vieux, tu as envie de faire pareil. **Ça fait que j’ai envie d’être quand même, une fois là-bas, j’ai envie d’être un modèle. J’ai envie que les jeunes puissent me regarder puis me dire comme moi j’aimerais ça plus tard être comme bénévole ou être employée pour les Jeux de l’Acadie puis comme j’aimerais revenir, j’aimerais travailler là.**

As noted above, servant leaders help leadership grow by sharing power with others in an organization, an aspect not referenced specifically in the interviews with young and established leaders from the AWG. However, several leaders did reference the latter three aspect of the servant leadership model, showing self-awareness and fostering the same quality in others, thinking critically about their actions and encouraging others to follow suit, providing support to others and showing them that they are part of something much larger than themselves. For example, when asked “*what kind of person he is trying to be*”, established leader Terran demonstrated both authenticity and stewardship when he stated:

Well, hmm, I don’t think it changes just because it’s the Arctic Winter Games. Like I’m just trying to be a mentor for these kids and help them achieve their goals. It doesn’t matter if it’s some tournament in Edmonton or Arctic Winter Games or whatever. **My philosophy doesn’t change.**

...I think, you know, providing kids with a good opportunity, help them understand the importance of trying to achieve something, you know, even if it means failure. Like reaching out and understanding that like, you know, making mistakes and failure helps you grow as a person. **Trying to build good community-minded people.** And yes, to me it's more about, you know, basketball is like a part of it, but just trying to make sure that they understand that they're a part of a community that supports them and being a good role model in school and life after basketball...I think it's about, you know, giving back, understanding the importance of volunteering in a community. I think it's just being respectful of people, especially your elders, you know? The importance of if you have a certain skill set, you should be sharing that with people. Those sorts of things.

## **Implications for Sport Program Delivery**

References to servant leadership were evident from many of our conversations with leaders from all three organizations. Furthermore, institutional documents align with the model – for example, the BGC Ottawa's institutional values are reminiscent of qualities and behaviours described by the principles of servant leadership and may help inspire or guide established leaders in the training of young leaders.

## **Suggested Paths Forward**

1. **Explore the principles of servant leader frameworks** (Greenleaf, 2007; Welty Peachy & Burton, 2017) and determine whether they would enhance discussions about leadership with members and staff (BGC Ottawa) and participants and coaches (JA and AWG)? If so, could the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG (and their affiliates) incorporate (or continue to incorporate) servant leadership principles? Could our community partners then add “using servant leadership to help members or participants develop into community servant leaders” to their missions?
2. **Incorporate servant leader principles into leader training programs**
3. **Encourage reflexivity** (at all levels) **with respect to leadership and the impact leaders have on those they serve**

## Capabilities Approach

### What Is It?

While PYD, SJYD and CYE are models of youth development that we felt emerged in our conversations, and the concept of servant leadership, which also emerged, is useful for considering the young and established leaders' style, another concept, the capabilities approach (CA), also seemed to be implicitly referenced in some of our conversations. Darnell and Dao (2020) argue that the CA may be worthwhile for sport scholars to use while highlighting the intrinsic value of sport in leading a just and worthwhile life. The CA, which originated in economics to investigate poverty and living standards, has been promoted for use in SDP and SfD and is described as follows (in the SfD context) by Darnell et al., 2021:

CA focuses on unpacking and understanding the real opportunities that individuals have—or do not have—to live their lives in ways that they have reason to value. Fundamentally, the CA considers and approaches these real opportunities—or *freedoms* [italics in original]—as rights, but only within the context in which a person lives. To do so, the CA necessarily considers personal, social, environmental, and structural factors (p. 610)

Also:

...in response to the challenge of social reproduction versus social change, applying the CA to SfD would support approaches committed to rights-based change rather than attempts at inclusion. That is, it would seek to identify, understand, and where possible remove, the barriers that preclude people from exercising their agency in pursuit of lives they deem to be valuable. In this sense, it would eschew bestowing development upon people or teaching them to pursue a particular type of kind of development, and instead support people's capabilities and functionings in the service of their own notion of development. In this sense, a CA framework in SfD would aim to support the agency of individuals to create their own meaningful lives, and in so doing specifically seek to avoid development as social reproduction in and through the terms of the relatively powerful. It would also be less concerned with 'delivering' development, and instead seek to support the social, political and material changes needed for transformative development to occur. We see this approach as much more rooted in, and compatible with, social change as opposed to reproduction (p. 617)

CA is an approach that fits with some of the responses given by those we interviewed, which is why we included it alongside PYD, SJYD, CYE and servant leadership. As mentioned earlier, we recognize that the BCG Ottawa, JA and AWG are not SfD programs and events, however, both servant leadership and the CA can be applied to the organization of community sport programs and events that focus on youth development, as well. Ultimately, if organizations adopt the CA, they do not follow a prescription for youth development or youth empowerment, with specific outcomes, because this "can obscure underlying inequalities (e.g., gender, race, class), reinforce neoliberal ideologies and overlook restraints on peoples' freedoms" (Zipp et al., 2019, p. 442). Rather they focus their energy on providing an environment that addresses Sen (1999) and Nussbaum's (2011) central tenet - "what are people able to do and what are they able to be"? This requires perpetually rethinking how they perform their work.

### How Does It Emerge?

While explaining the work BGC Ottawa does, CA was referenced by both established and young leaders: For example, young leader Mariah suggested the Club attempts to meet youth where they are and strives to help them be who they are able to be, while established leader Ashton further claimed:

Mariah: And it's very... There's everything from arts and crafts to canoeing to leadership to empowerment. It's all these things, and that's because **the fabric of what the Boys and Girls Club is it's all of those things.**

Ashton: Essentially, you'd look at each individual child and find what they need to support them through their growth and their development. And that's one of the greatest abilities of the club is that **we have the ability to change based on the needs of the community that we're working with.**

Here, both young and established leaders remarked that the Club is flexible such that it can change programming based on the capabilities of the members and engages with the fundamental question of the CA: "what are people able to do and what are they able to be"?

CA appeared in our conversations with a few of our young and established leaders from the JA, as well. For example, when asked "if there is one thing you want me to understand from your experience as a young person coming back and getting involved in the Games, what would it be?", young leader Séraphine replied:

Il faut valoriser l'expérience des gens. Ça fait que ce n'est pas seulement de revenir aux Jeux de l'Acadie. C'est, si toi en tant que personne t'es consciente que tes expériences peuvent contribuer à ce qu'on a aux Jeux de l'Acadie, bien cette personne-là devrait avoir le *motif* de s'y rendre. Ce n'est pas genre on cherche des employés d'été ou on cherche des employés. C'est plutôt du genre "t'as des expériences qui peuvent contribuer à ce qu'on a besoin ou à ce qu'on a," dans le fond.

Puis tu sais, on entend souvent du genre comme « t'as les habiletés qu'on recherche », mais des habiletés ça s'acquiert. Mais des expériences, il faut que t'aies un *back pack*, tu sais? Puis ça, c'est des discussions que j'ai déjà eues avec plusieurs gens. **Comme j'essaie toujours de valoriser les expériences des gens.** C'est comme j'ai dit, mes expériences j'en ai plein, mais il y a des gens qui ont plein d'expérience que moi j'aurai jamais, tu sais? **Puis il faut valoriser ça, puis c'est comme ça qu'on réussira à avoir des gens dans nos communautés.**

In this quote, Séraphine speaks to the idea that meaningful experiences are what should be valued when hiring workers and volunteers rather than specific skills, which can be acquired. Deeply valuing people's lived experiences (which may or may not include struggles with poverty, racism, sexism, classism, etc.) and asking "what are you able to do for the JA" based on these experiences arguably leads to better hiring outcomes and, ultimately, the construction of stronger communities.

## Implications for Sport Program Delivery

References to the CA emerged explicitly in our interviews in two of the three organizations, however, we felt that 'delivering' development (as described by Darnell et al., 2021) was discussed more often by young and established leaders.

The questions then become – how can these organizations design programs and events that enable youth to become the people they can be, based on their capabilities? Can the CA approach be implemented alongside youth development models? If so, how? Can (and if so, how can) these organizations "support the social, political and material changes needed for transformative development to occur" (Darnell et al., 2021, p. 617)?

## Suggested Paths Forward

1. **Focus on** Sen (1999) and Nussbaum's (2011) central tenet - "**what are people able to do and what are they able to be**" and find ways of training leaders and delivering programs that help children and youth get there

- 2. Encourage reflexivity (at all levels) with respect to helping children and youth become what they want to be, and ask leaders to regularly consider working within this framework**

## THEME #2 – Sense of Belonging and Commitment to Community Development

As elucidated above, young and established leaders expressed an **understanding of their work** and, in various ways, suggested that they are providing children and youth with development opportunities through their “giving back”. A second theme that stuck out for us was related to **how they feel while doing this work**. Interview participants were explicitly asked about their sense of belonging and to what community they felt they were contributing to through their “giving back” (i.e., what community are they helping to develop) with respect to their involvement with their organization or event. Why are a sense of belonging to a community and an understanding of what community one is contributing to so important to investigate?

Government agencies (e.g., The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario (2019), Statistics Canada (2023)) and scholars (e.g., Bauman, 2013), suggest that people – particularly young people<sup>25</sup>– are feeling more disconnected from their communities<sup>26</sup> than in the past. Strong connections to communities are vital – there is a high correlation between sense of belonging to one or more communities and people’s physical and mental health – and this need is even more important in adolescence. People are struggling to feel a sense of belonging for a multitude of reasons (including excessive technology use, the increasing pace of modern life, the breaking down of social structures, the threatening of cultural and ethnic values – see Allan et al., 2021), many of which were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Scholars (e.g., Jose et al., 2012) have documented that well-being can be enhanced by satisfying children and youths’ need to be connected to others, for example through meaningful relationships with peers and caring, compassionate and competent adults – i.e., feeling a sense of belonging – and, importantly, feeling a sense of belonging is essential for PYD (see Lerner et al., 2005) as well as SJYD and CYE. As social scientists, knowing that people are increasingly feeling disconnected from their communities, we want to figure out how to help solve this issue – how can we help people feel more connected? To do this, we must explore how people think about their relationship to their communities.

Why look at this through sport? Social capital literature suggests that relationships and trust fostered through sport participation leads to greater involvement in the community outside of sport (Perks, 2007). Sport is thus a venue through which to explore people’s connections to their communities. Sports and physical activities are also communities in and of themselves – for example formal sports teams or clubs, informal groups who congregate to participate, community groups that offer sport programs (such as the BGC Ottawa), etc. – and are thus worth exploring, as well as larger communities outside of sport. It is important to note that there are many different types of community organizations that offer programming, including some that seek to serve children and youth who have limited access to programming due to systemic barriers, geographical barriers and/or to help preserve cultural communities (including the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG). Researching the experiences of people who are active in these kinds of organizations and events is central to understand if and how the organizations are successful at achieving their goals and to find best practices that can be shared with other organizations (e.g., incorporation of SJYD, CYE, servant leadership, CA, etc.). Furthermore, exploring people’s experiences to determine whether, through their engagement (or “giving back”), they feel a sense of belonging to and/or connectedness to the community the organization is serving is most valuable to understand sport’s larger social impact. In our case, we wondered – how does sport become, for its young and established

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<sup>25</sup> Our initial focus for the larger project was on young leaders’ experiences but we extended our research focus to include the experiences of more established leaders who were involved as members of the BCG Ottawa or participants the JA or AWG as youth and/or young adults, as we found they shared similar experiences and perspectives.

<sup>26</sup> We recognize that communities are not always positive constructs and agree with Rich et al’s (2021) assessment that “a blind acceptance of community may serve to mask the politics inherent in communities and silence the voices of diverse community members” (p. 7).

leaders, a place of community involvement that allows them to “build the community” through actions with children and youth? Do the young and established leaders we interviewed feel a sense of belonging to a community while working for the BGC Ottawa, JA or AWG? If so, do they feel they are helping to develop that/those communities?

## Sense of Belonging

### What Is It?

Hagerty et al., (1992) define belonging as

“the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment. A system can be a relationship or organization, and an environment can be natural or cultural” (p. 173).

Allen et al., (2021) further define sense of belonging as “the subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences” (p. 87). Thus, a sense of belonging is when a person feels as though they are important in the lives and experiences of other people (for example in families, friendships, schools, work environments, cultural groups, neighbourhoods etc.), other living beings and/or physical places and vice versa. More simply put, “it’s about how much we believe we fit in a group or place – and how much that group or place welcomes or includes us” (Community Foundations of Canada, 2015, p. 2).<sup>27</sup> What do we mean by a group or place? Here, we are referring to community.

According to Bauman (2001), “whatever the word ‘community’ may mean, it is good ‘to have a community’, ‘to be in a community’”. What does the word “community” mean, though? Glover and Sharpe (2021) call on those researching communities to think about the notion of ‘community’ before exploring specific cases, particularly because it is a concept that has shifted with time. What remains stable is that the notion of community results from emotion or sensibility and conjures up feelings of warmth, familiarity, and safety, and a “fitting in” vibe, which are essential to meeting humans’ fundamental need for meaningful social connection and a sense of belonging. While community used to refer to people living in a defined geographic locations’ connection to one another, the term arguably shifted in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to refer to people’s shared experiences in their consciousness (Pahl, 2005). Geography still plays a role in many communities (e.g., in the case of the JA and the AWG, participants are limited by geography and not by policy but due to travel logistics, to some extent, BGC Ottawa members are, too); however, others are not bound by borders or landscapes and fluidity of members and ideas are central components (Glover & Sharpe, 2021; Rich et al., 2021). In current times, “quite literally”, wrote Bessant (2014, p. 471), “people think, talk, and act community into existence in the course of their everyday interactions” and as Carter and Baliko (2017) suggest, there as a “messiness” of being in a community, because being together is not about existing on common ground but rather about accepting that strife has its place, as does harmony and everything in between. A sense of belonging to a community is thus feeling as though one fits with the community and that the community warmly receives them, even if the feeling is messy and fluid over time. Paradoxically, while opportunities for joining communities have

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<sup>27</sup> It is important to note that sense of belonging and identity have been used interchangeably in some bodies of literature (e.g., literature on citizenship). However, we view them as distinct concepts – we use the definitions of sense of belonging identified above and define identity as referring to “who you are” – i.e., where you live, what gender you identify as, your ethnicity, if you are someone’s child/sibling/caregiver/friend, the music you like, activities you do, etc. A person develops their identities (we all have multiple identities) over the course of their lives and identities are fluid and can change as life circumstances shift. Adolescence is often a point of struggle for shaping and understanding identity and an important time to learn that sharing an identity with one or more people can help a person fit in a group or place (i.e., feel a sense of belonging).

expanded with increased communications technologies, feeling a strong sense of belonging to a community is becoming more elusive than ever.

## How Does It Emerge?

When asked about their sense of belonging, six BGC Ottawa young leaders felt a strong sense of belonging with the Club. In fact, most of the young leaders felt that the BGC Ottawa was very much a part of them now and in the future. For example, according to young leaders Alexei and Anna:

Alexei: I built a connection with the Boys and Girls Club, that's for sure, 100 per cent. I do have a sense of belonging and it is a part of who I am.

Anna: I feel like I'm rooted in the Boys and Girls Club. This is where I was raised essentially, so it's like my family, so I can't really leave them, you know? Even if I have school or if I have other things, I'll still try to find my way back here.

Interestingly, despite the organization's efforts to demonstrate to its young members, through programming and activities (i.e., visits to Parliament, professional sport events, participation in a citywide basketball league, etc.) that their citizenship extends beyond the walls of the clubhouse to the City of Ottawa, and despite its success in encouraging and training members for engagement outside of the BGC Ottawa, the young leaders we interviewed spontaneously discussed their strong attachment to the Club. Although some of them explained that they also identify with the city of Ottawa, school communities, cultural or faith groups, etc. they all expressed a sense of belonging to the BGC Ottawa because of the Club's positive environment and the outcomes in their lives. This ultimately fuels their desire to "give back" to the Club and to incoming young members. Established leaders also discussed their sense of belonging to the BGC Ottawa, some to the specific Clubhouse they work at.

When asked about their sense of belonging, all young and established JA leaders who responded to the question mentioned a link to the Francophonie (global community of people that share French as a common language), in one way or another. For some it was their main identity, for others it was a qualifier for a broader affiliation, such as "French-speaking Canadian" or "French-speaking New Brunswicker". Or it was a dimension that was self-evident in the term "Acadian" or that was included in the "bilingual" identity.

Only two young leaders, among all the people interviewed, did not express any Acadian affiliation. One of them had no Acadian roots and identified herself as "bilingual" given her family background. Another young leader chose the term "bilingual" but explained that she felt a certain belonging to the Acadian community that she did not feel towards the English-speaking community of New Brunswick. The other young leader who refused to identify as Acadian found the minority dimension heavy to bear and therefore preferred the expression "French-speaking Canadian". Another person who identified himself as "French-speaking Canadian" was proud of his Acadian heritage but preferred to display a broader affiliation. A certain link to the Acadian community thus emerged in the responses of 21 of the 23 young and established leaders interviewed. That most of the leaders spoke of a sense of belonging to Acadia was remarkable. However, few spoke of a sense of belonging to the JA specifically. Who, then are the young and established leaders "giving back to"? What community are they developing through their work? We discuss this in the next section.

What about the AWG? Scholars who explored the feelings of AWG participants through multiple years of research (Lankford, et al., 2010), maintain that "participants experience benefits related to sense of belonging and strengthening of community ties" (p. 33). What about the young and established leaders who make the AWG happen? When asked about sense of belonging, eight young and established AWG leaders stated one group to which they most strongly felt a sense of belonging. Eleven leaders felt a sense of belonging to more than one group. The most common responses included feeling a sense of

belonging to the community in which they live, to their province / territory / state, to their Arctic Winter Games contingent or to their sport club, their sport, sport in general, or a combination. For example, established leaders Sonia and Jesse, and young leader Melly explained:

Sonia: **I'm a Yukoner.** That's what I feel. Yeah. (Province / territory / state).

Jesse: That was a neat thing, getting to do that. So yeah, you're representing your community and your Association, but in terms of the Arctic Winter Games, yeah, **it's Team NWT**, but on the inside you're pretty proud for your community and of your community, I guess.

Melly: That's a good question. I don't know. Probably right now to the girls' hockey team specifically just because I have a lot of responsibility there. But like if I think about Arctic Winter Games as a whole, in general, I feel like I just belong to Arctic Winter Games as a whole, you know? I don't know. Probably all three, but **number one would be girls' hockey, and then I'm also involved with Team Alaska and then I'm also involved with everything, as a whole**, but kind of depending on how you look at it or what specific part of it you're looking at.

Established leader, Kerstie, said it was to the AWG:

Christine: Would it be fair to say that your strongest sense of attachment is to the Games per se, not to the sport, not to the delegation but to the actual event?

Kerstie: I think that probably is true. Yeah. [...] I think that's definitely it because I mean like I said, **I call myself the Arctic Winter Games biggest fan.**

When asked what her sense of belonging is with respect to the AWG, another established leader, Colette, stated that her sense of belonging relates to advocacy for Indigenous peoples:

Colette (Contingent Leader): **Advocate.** The last few months, that role for me has kind of changed because we realized that they were trying to take out the adult athletes in Arctic and Dene games for 2024... It's supposed to be just a youth competition, I guess. And when we asked the question who was making these decisions and were there any Aboriginal people making these decisions on the International Committee or on the Technical Committee, I couldn't... There were none. And I think with the, what is the movement going on in Canada with the making everything right with...?

Christine: Reconciliation.

Colette: Reconciliation. They thought "Oh, this is not part of our reconciliation to our Native people", and they finally decided that, "Okay, we're not going to take out the older athletes because it's our responsibility to teach and coach and show them the true essence of what Arctic sports and Dene games are all about." You can't get that from a 20-year-old. That is just not part of it. The officials' responsibility as well. **So, advocate for our Aboriginal people and our Aboriginal sports is my biggest, my biggest role for my sports.**

Colette's response affirms that the notion of social justice is what makes her feel like she belongs at the AWG and acts as a crucial motivating factor. Colette's perceived connection to the AWG as an advocate makes sense given that scholars (e.g., Paraschak, 1997; Giles, 2008) and leaders working with the AWG (see Arctic Winter Games, 2008b) claim that throughout AWG history, there has not been enough Indigenous input or Indigenous athletes participating. Importantly, concern for social justice and inclusion of children and youth from all parts of the region did emerge in other interviews, often without explicit reference to distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children and youth. For example, athletes' social class was also mentioned as something interview participants thought about. Like Colette, some AWG leaders thus feel they belong at the Games and see their work as an opportunity to address some of these injustices. While interesting, this is not specific to the AWG – sport workers' focus on social justice has been documented by sport scholars, most evidently those exploring SDP projects (e.g., Darnell, 2011; Welty Peachey, et al. 2014). As noted above, we also found instances of this focus on social justice in both the BGC Ottawa and JA interviews.

Interestingly, only three participants suggested they felt a strong sense of belonging to the North. For example, established leader, Shaun, responded:

Well, I'm a Northerner, you know, so that's just part of my fabric.

Others clearly felt the connection to the North but did not identify it when asked specifically about their sense of belonging.

### **Implications for Sport Program Delivery**

Our reading is that all three community partners seem to be extremely successful at fostering a sense of belonging amongst their leaders. The BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG seem to be developing “communities” where members/participants feel they “belong” – one where identity is acknowledged by many but not indicative of how a member or participant will be served or mentored. The BGC Ottawa offers young and established leaders (and, arguably members, given most of these leaders came to their roles after having been members) a strong sense of belonging. By contrast, young and established leaders from the JA and the AWG have a sense of belonging to their language, sports, contingents and places they live rather than the JA or the AWG specifically. Regardless, feeling a sense of belonging to some community because of participating and subsequently volunteering or working at the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG is impactful for young and established leaders, and, given such documented struggles to feel connected to any community, an imperative impetus for them to persist.

### **Suggested Paths Forward:**

1. **Have ongoing conversations in which young and established leaders discuss what constitutes their sense of belonging.**
2. **Accept and discuss the “messiness” that comes with sense of belonging (and identity)**
3. **Encourage reflexivity (at all levels) with respect to sense of belonging**

## Community Development

### What Is It?

Communities are, as described above, groups or places that we feel connected to. How does one develop a community? While community development has been defined in a multitude of ways, Mataritta-Cascante and Brennan, (2012) suggest that:

Community development is a process that entails organization, facilitation, and action, which allows people to establish ways to create the community they want to live in. It is a process that provides vision, planning, direction, and coordinated action towards desired goals associated with the promotion of efforts aimed at improving the conditions in which local resources operate. As a result, community developers harness local economic, human, and physical resources to secure daily requirements and respond to changing needs and conditions (p. 297)

Community development is thus about people building the communities they envision, while ensuring the sustainability of the resources needed to maintain such development. Sport contributes to community development in many ways – for example, sport plays a role in capacity building and the construction of collective identities, sport spaces provide opportunities to forge connections and socialize that are not possible in other milieus, and sport can contribute to overall community well-being (Dellacasa & Oliver, 2023). Importantly, though, as previously mentioned, sport initiatives designed with community development in mind, and aimed at tackling inequities, are sometimes used as a means for social control through their focus on personal responsibility and attempts to help people participating become compliant, productive, and employable within the current system rather than actively challenging structural inequalities (Dellacasa & Oliver, 2023). Thus, sport can be both an emancipatory venue and a constraining one, with respect to community development.

### How Does It Emerge?

Did the young and established leaders see the BGC Ottawa as the community to which they were “giving back” to? In our report to the BGC Ottawa, we highlighted that, indeed, most of the young leaders saw the Club as the “community” to which they are contributing, rather than a neighbourhood or the City of Ottawa, which suggests that they perceive the BGC Ottawa as a “community” itself. As Anna put it, “a family” where members have access to loving, caring helpful adults outside their homes and schools. This is significant, as Zeldin et al., (2016) report that youth are increasingly disconnected from their communities and are particularly impacted by the decline in perceived support from non-familial adults. Additionally, according to the 2018 Status of Mental Health in Ottawa report, only two-thirds of people 12 years and older reported a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community (Ottawa Public Health, 2018).

When asked how they see the community to which they contribute, established leaders almost unanimously cited Ottawa as the “community.” They described the club’s impact on neighbourhoods, but also its reach across the National Capital (Ottawa) Region. Therefore, the established leaders felt that their contributions extended beyond the walls of the Club and contributed to “create the community they want to live in” (as suggested by Materitta-Cascante & Brennan, 2019, p. 297).

Interestingly, throughout the interviews, “community” was rarely if ever defined along racial or ethnic lines by either young or established leaders, despite the perception (of several young leaders) that many members belong to visible minorities. It was only when Christine explicitly raised issues of race by asking direct questions that young leaders discussed it. This was also true of the interviews with the administrators. When asked why they did not spontaneously speak about issues of race and visible minority status in the City of Ottawa context to describe the BGC Ottawa or the community (neighbourhood or city), the young and established leaders said that they were not trying to avoid the topic, but that race did not enter the equation when they thought about the BGC Ottawa community. The

unanimous agreement on the “irrelevancy” of race among all interview participants, especially the young leaders, was most striking. For example, according to young leader Jacob:

**I think it's irrelevant** because the kids, when they go to school, maybe there's race there or they're being singled out there, but when they come to Boys and Girls Club, there's a diverse staff that come from all different backgrounds. So, I don't think staff really look to race or look to gender when it comes to dealing with kids. Obviously, maybe some kids listen to a female staff more than a male staff and they're aware of that; but when it comes to opportunities and when it comes to interactions, race is irrelevant, and gender is irrelevant

Established leaders from the JA expressed a variety of motivations for their “giving back”. The development of youth, sport, a sense of belonging to specific regions of Acadia and Acadia in general, and the French language were all discussed<sup>28</sup>, with each interview participant speaking specifically about one or more aspects. Young leaders expressed similar motivations, with a few, including young leaders Myriam and Vanessa, mentioning “giving back” to the JA specifically:

Myriam : Bien la première chose c'est **redonner à une organisation qui m'en a donné beaucoup comme jeune, qui m'a motivée à essayer certains sports, qui m'a permis de rencontrer des gens et tout ça.**

Vanessa : **Bien je pense que les Jeux de l'Acadie c'est le genre d'événement qui fait justement que les jeunes qui ont participé et qui ont la chance de vivre ça veulent redonner à cette communauté.** Parce que ce n'est pas tout le monde, ce n'est pas tous les événements qui font comme « Ah, j'ai joué au soccer en fin de semaine pour tel club. Je veux absolument redonner. » Comme les Jeux de l'Acadie te donnent le sentiment de « Je veux faire partie de cette famille-là encore un jour. Je veux faire partie de cette communauté. » Puis c'est vraiment un sentiment d'appartenance, je crois. Justement c'est tellement un grand sentiment d'appartenance puis de fierté qui fait que même quand t'es jeune, on dirait que tu le sais déjà que tu veux, tu vois les bénévoles, tu vois justement la communauté jeunesse et tout ça.

Another young leader, Nina, was asked why she was motivated to ensure that the JA continue. She responded:

**Bien c'est pour les jeunes puis c'est pour la région puis c'est pour la langue comme tu disais tantôt.** Les Jeux de l'Acadie ce n'est pas juste les sports. Quand tu vas dans la région, bien à Miramichi, tu sais ils font beaucoup, beaucoup d'efforts. Ils se font voir. Puis quand les Jeux bougent bien c'est comme ça pour les différentes régions.

Interestingly, despite most of the young and established leaders references to their Acadian identity ties, few (other than Myriam and Vanessa) claim to be “giving back” to the JA or even the Acadian or French-speaking communities. Both the young and established leaders were working towards the mission of the SJA, which is to contribute to the development of French-speaking youth in the Atlantic provinces through sporting competitions and cultural activities (Société des Jeux de l'Acadie, 2019), however, when asked – to which community are you “giving back” – young and established leaders did not express an investment

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<sup>28</sup> These are the goals of the JA.

in Francophone or Acadian community development. Deveau et al., (2005) have already observed that although adolescents in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia identify as Francophones, they are less able to express a commitment to the community. In a previous comparison of participants in different French-speaking games, Dallaire (2008) noted that athletes at the Finale des Jeux de l'Acadie rarely mentioned the strategic dimension of being a French-speaking minority as well as the need to contribute to community institutions and activities. While the young and established leaders demonstrate an ability to reflect on their relationship to the French language and Acadian culture, few of them mention the concept of community development except when discussing their responsibility to "give back" so that other youth can benefit from the Games or to support the organizations that have enabled their sporting activities or for the development of the region (e.g., Myriam). Interestingly, though, after years of studies on minority French-speaking games (see Dallaire, 2003a, 2007, 2008, 2014), we note that the JA prove to be those which offer the most integrated and tightest knit French-speaking community.

Why is it that so many young and established leaders spoke about their Francophone identity but so few referenced "giving back" to the Acadian or French-speaking communities and to the JA specifically? It is possible that the place of community is so prevalent that it is taken for granted by young and established leaders and therefore they do not feel the need to support it. Furthermore, the Finale celebrates Acadian culture and the French language without highlighting the political and social causes that ensure their development (Dallaire, 2008). Young and established leaders are therefore not immersed in the Games in an environment that emphasizes struggles for language rights and the duty to commit to community survival, compared for instance to the Jeux franco-ontariens (Dallaire 2004, 2007). Although they do not express concern for the development of the community, their involvement in the Acadian Games undoubtedly contributes to community development (Allain, 2007). The Finale offers them a space where they feel a powerful sense of belonging to the community. This experience forges their desire to "give back", whether to young people or to the community, so that other participants can experience these powerful moments.

Interview participants from the AWG also explained how they see the community to which they are contributing. Interestingly, despite having unanimously positive descriptions of the AWG (with a few explicitly identifying the AWG as a community in this question), they rarely identified the AWG as the community to which they felt they were "giving back" to. In other words, while interview participants spoke about people of/in the North, the struggles that bind them together, and the AWG as a community in and of itself, they did not see the AWG as the community to which they were contributing. The communities they most often identified include: the local community in which they live, young athletes in general or the young athletes they work with specifically, and their sport community (including coaches, volunteers, parents).

Importantly, 14 interview participants identified multiple communities to which they were contributing, which can be associated with participants' multiple identities – i.e., sense of belonging to multiple different groups (see Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015). For example, Graham (Contingent Leader) identified three communities – the community in which he lives, the local hockey community and kids who have not yet had the opportunity as the communities to which he was "giving back" to. While Graham and other interview participants referred to multiple communities (and thus multiple identities) when they acknowledged regional communities (e.g., contingents and communities where they live), sport communities (e.g., hockey, in Graham's case), communities in need, etc., some also referenced communities that appeared to be complimentary but, as argued by Thomsen et al. are not (and are actually tied to contradictory identities, also referred to as hybrid identities – see Dallaire, 2006). When interview participants spoke about the AWG community and/or a panarctic community and their regional community (and the identities tied to those communities), while subtle, it became clear that attempts to create a panarctic identity are challenged rather than promoted when contingents are separated visually (e.g., using uniforms) and through the competitive format of most athletic events at the Games. Indeed, Thomsen et al. (2018) suggest that at the AWG "panarcticism and nationalism/regionalism are clearly enrolled in an intricate and frictious relationship" (p. 112). While appearing as though they are multiple and complimentary identities and "although panarctic identity building is an explicit purpose of the

games—as stated in the AWGIC constitution—participants and spectators . . . enacted parallel and contrasting identities in a seemingly knee-jerk relapse to national/regional positioning” (Thomsen et al., 2018, p. 111). In other words, while the sentiment of a community consisting of all “people of the North” is presented and promoted, it is hard to achieve when national/regional communities (and identities) are strongly promoted, as well. However, that most interview participants referred to multiple communities (and identities tied to those communities) rather than contradictory identities suggests that the AWG offers a milieu that allows the manifestation of a sense of belonging to more than one group – it does not expect participants to commit only to a panarctic community (and identity) while at the Games, despite some attempts to create such a community (see Thomsen, et al., 2018).

That most interview participants did not identify the AWG as the community to which they are contributing suggests that they may not see the AWG as one community but rather a conglomerate of many communities – some tied to multiple identities, some tied to contradictory identities. Regardless of how the AWGIC wants the AWG to be seen, and what community leaders “give back” and feel most connected to, what is most important is the fact that people involved with the AWG build social connections and feel a sense of belonging to something. Whether the community ends up being their sport community, the contingent or their local community rather than the overall community of the AWG, it may not matter. What matters is that the AWG offer a space where people develop strong connections and feel part of a community, any community, which is crucial given the disconnectedness felt by many in present times. This can be said for the BGC Ottawa and the JA, as well.

## **Implications for Sport Program Delivery**

All three community partners seem to be extremely successful at fostering, in their leaders, a desire to develop the communities to which they belong (however they describe them). Young leaders often described the BGC Ottawa as the “community” to which they are contributing. Established leaders see the “community” they are developing as the city of Ottawa (and/or a specific Ottawa neighbourhood). By contrast, young and established leaders from the JA and the AWG mostly do not describe these events (and what they attempt to promote, including the Francophonie in the case of the JA and the North, in the case of the AWG) as the “communities” they are helping develop. However, both the JA and the AWG are seen as places where multiple identities are allowed to coalesce, suggestive that these events provide space for volunteers and workers to contribute to some form of community (i.e., the community they feel personally connected to) while engaging in their volunteer and work activities. It is important to note that the JA and AWG are staged events that take place in specific cycles and in different locations, which differs from the BGC Ottawa, a stable place that one can be a member of for many years. It makes sense, then, that young and established leaders understand the BGC Ottawa as a place in which community development is happening, more so than the leaders at the JA and the AWG.

Importantly, in this discourse of “giving back” and developing communities, we must ensure that we are not training leaders to do as they are governed to do, (through policies, etc.) which may ultimately reproduce the social structures that lead to the challenges youth face in the first place (e.g., BGC Ottawa – racism, poverty, etc., JA – ensuring/protecting Francophone language and cultural rights, AWG – geographical remoteness, racism, etc.). Instead, through this focus on sense of belonging and community development, we must consider and accept the messiness that comes with both feelings of connectedness (sense of belonging) and attempts to contribute to community development (see Carter & Baliko, 2017) and provide an opening for social change to happen.

## **Suggested Paths Forward**

1. **Have** ongoing conversations in which **young and established leaders discuss** what **community/ies** they feel they are serving
2. **Accept and discuss the “messiness” that comes with** leaders’ feelings about what community **(who) they are contributing to**. Encourage leaders to contribute to a community, any community

3. **Encourage reflexivity** (at all levels) **with respect to community development**

## THEME #3 – Deep Motivations: Meanings Leaders Give for their Work

After highlighting the first theme that emerged, **how young and established leaders understand their work** (with respect to how it helps children and youth develop) and the second theme, **how they feel while doing this work**, (with respect to sense of belonging and community development) we now explain our impressions of **why they do this work** (deep motivations for giving back). While no one explicitly identified community engagement as their motivation to work or volunteer for the BGC Ottawa, the JA or the AWG, given that most responses referenced a desire to make a difference in the day-to-day lives of people around them (in particular children and youth) suggests that their work does, indeed, consist of community engagement. Multiple motivations for volunteering or working for the BGC Ottawa and JA were described in a paper with our colleague, Audrey Bégin<sup>29</sup>. Ultimately, it appears as though the leaders' motivations have strong links with how they think about or see the BGC Ottawa, JA or AWG, a predictable finding. Given this predictability, why bother exploring BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG young and established leaders' motivations, anyways? Scholars exploring the motivations of volunteers in large scale events, community sports organizations and events and even SDP projects suggest an important purpose of their research is to help sport managers effectively manage the volunteer experience (i.e., ensuring volunteers are effective in their roles and satisfied with their experience) and, ultimately, to understand how to develop better recruitment, training and retention strategies – in other words, in this case, how to keep the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG going, a crucial task referenced by many of the interview participants. While these studies are useful for stakeholders from the sports sector, as Welty Peachey et al. (2014) noted, “future research should attempt to move beyond the commonly articulated values motive and probe deeper for underlying motives” (p. 1064). This deeper understanding could help sport managers engage and retain workers and volunteers, but it could also ultimately help researchers, practitioners, governments and funders develop a more nuanced understanding of worker and volunteer experiences and even lead to changing sport so that it is a more transformative experience for all involved. Indeed, we were struck by the sense that there were “deep motivations” for “giving back” that added another layer to the motivations described in our earlier analysis with Bégin and those described thus far in academic literature, and we thus decided to take a dive deep into both the literature and the data to determine whether our hunch was correct.

We scoured the literature and had conversations with colleagues which led to the selection of three concepts that we felt accurately captured our interview participants' explanations of why they “give back”. These include the concept of what we call “reciprocation” based on French sociologist and anthropologist, Marcel Mauss' (1990) description of “the Gift”, the concept of what we call “responsibility” based on German-born American Jewish philosopher Hans Jonas' (1984) claim that as human beings, we all feel an imperative of responsibility to one another and the concept of “resonance”, what German sociologist and political scientist Hartmut Rosa describes as a “responsive relationship that entails progressive, mutual transformation and adaptation” (p. 48). We briefly describe these concepts and then explain how we think they explain BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG volunteer and worker motivations. Of note, in the AWG interviews, we specifically asked interview participants if they were “giving back” because they wanted to reciprocate or because they felt a responsibility to “give back”. In the BGC Ottawa and JA interviews, we did not ask this question specifically. Furthermore, we did not ask any of our interview participants about resonance per se but were able to tease it out of the interview data once we recognized its presence and grasped the importance of the concept for the persistence of these organizations.

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<sup>29</sup> Audrey's categories for motivation including Value, Learn, Personal development, Career, Social, Protection, Love of sports, Commitment to the organization, Share your knowledge, Encouraged by a third party, Pleasure of sport\*, Commitment to a minority\*, Be a good citizen/ Make young people good citizens\*

Ultimately, we attempted to determine – why do the young and established leaders do their work? Did they feel they should reciprocate; did they feel responsible and/or did they feel “in tune” with the BGC Ottawa (and its members), JA (and its participants) or the AWG (and participants)? What does this matter for sport delivery?

## Reciprocation

### What Is It?

In “The Gift”, Mauss (1990) suggests that people experience deep feelings of obligation/duty to accept and to reciprocate when given a gift, whether it be a physical item, time or care. He explained that in ancient societies, there were three obligations – to give, to receive and to reciprocate. He also suggested that in present day societies, obligation is still present when a gift is given, even if people give gifts without an expectation of receiving one in return. Each gift is a part of a system of reciprocity – “the system is quite simple; just the rule that every gift has to be returned in some specified way sets up a perpetual cycle of exchanges within and between generations” (Mauss, 1990, p. xi). According to Mauss (1990) the reciprocation of the “Gift” is ultimately related to social connectedness and is required for societies to thrive. Becker (2014) argued that reciprocity is closely connected to gratitude but also suggests connections between gratitude and equality, obligation (or duty) and justice. When explored as a process, McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) found that reciprocity starts with gratitude and once this is felt, individuals reciprocate to honour their notions of equality, obligation and justice. Compared to others, more grateful individuals are thus more likely to “give back” by engaging in direct (“paying it back” to the organization or community) or indirect upstream (“paying it forward” to current members or participants) reciprocity and contributing to causes outside of themselves, to enhance feelings of equality, obligation and justice. Importantly, McCullough, Kimeldorf and Cohen (2008) determined that gratitude differs from obligation and indebtedness, in that feelings of obligation or indebtedness are negative emotions and lead to distress towards a benefactor, whereas feelings of gratitude lead to a desire to help a benefactor. Enthusiastic and genuine reciprocation thus seems to stem from a deep feeling of gratitude.

Some of the young and established leaders in these case studies felt the need (obligation/duty) to pay it back to the BGC Ottawa, JA or AWG (direct reciprocity) or forward to current members or participants (indirect, upstream reciprocity) and some expressed a great deal of gratitude for what they were given as members or participants. Therefore, some were motivated to reciprocate due to negative emotions and some from positive emotions. Regardless, reciprocation was present as a motivation for “giving back”.

### How Does It Emerge?

Almost all of the BGC Ottawa workers and volunteers framed giving back as an act of reciprocity. Many workers and volunteers interviewed for this study expressed their gratitude to the BGC Ottawa, the JA, and the AWG and spoke of their feelings about equality, obligation and justice when talking about giving back.

For example, Alice (young leader, BGC Ottawa) discussed both her feelings of gratitude and her feelings of obligation towards the BGC Ottawa after first explaining how being a member at the BGC Ottawa humbled her, given that she lived and went to school in a high-income environment but always had less than her peers in her community. Her comments suggests that she is grateful to the BGC Ottawa for providing her a welcoming community and helping her understand that she did not have to compare herself to others.:

Yeah. Definitely. It was a place that wasn't... For a lot of kids, it's a place where there's just no judgement, but I kind of felt maybe again, there was no judgement when I was there, **but it was just I went from everyone just having it all, to go to a**

place where I really felt more grateful for what I had. It kind of was just an eye opener.

She heavily referenced obligation as part of her choice to reciprocate.

Alice: I feel I still have to be there. I feel some sort of emotional obligation and attachment to the Club. I can't let it go yet.

Christine: What's the obligation part?

Alice: **I don't know. I just felt like I still owe something to them.** I felt they gave me a lot, they gave me so many opportunities. I just got a huge scholarship paid for my whole tuition this year from them...And so I feel they've given me so much, I just have to give back. I feel like I can't leave them. There's so many kids there that need that. And I don't know. I just feel like I have to be part of it.

Alice ultimately claims that she must give back to the BGC Ottawa to pay for what she received which, according to Mauss, will help perpetuate the cycle of exchanges within and between generations of children and youth at the BGC Ottawa and keep the community thriving. In "the Gift", Mauss (1990) focused on obligation when he detailed his reading of reciprocity. He explained that in ancient societies, there were three obligations – to give, to receive and to reciprocate. He also suggested that in present day societies, obligation is still present when a gift is given, even if people give gifts without an expectation of receiving one in return.

While the majority of BGC Ottawa young and established leaders mentioned reciprocation as a motivation to work for the club, only about half of the JA workers and volunteers framed giving back as an act of reciprocity. Vanessa, a young leader who participated in multiple JA games (in a variety of sports), returned to volunteer in more general terms at the regional games (multiple times) and as an assistant coach at the Finals, highlighted her gratitude for the coaches who helped her and explained that she wanted to reciprocate by helping the next generation:

Parce que comme que je dis c'est comme je suis consciente à quel point que les entraîneurs que j'ai eus, tout le temps qu'ils donnaient bénévolement comme **j'ai tellement comme j'ai toujours été « grateful » du temps qu'ils m'ont donné. Ça fait que je veux redonner ça**, je veux permettre à des jeunes....

Several JA young and established leaders expressed gratitude to explain their involvement. For example, Nadette, an established leader who participated in three games and returned to the Finals multiple times in a variety of roles, including manager of numerous different sport teams, and chef de mission for her region, had a similar response to Alice's in that she acknowledged her gratitude and felt that she wanted to "give back" so that youth could have a similar experience to hers.

Je dirais que je pense comme pour moi, l'expérience a été assez mémorable comme enfant que j'ai voulu le redonner aux jeunes d'à c't'heure si tu veux là. Ça a fait une grosse différence pour moi dans ma vie, dans mon déroulement en tant qu'athlète, en tant que personne. **Ça fait que je crois que c'est là où est-ce que pour moi je redonne ça à des jeunes qui viennent aux Jeux de l'Acadie.**

When asked to tell one thing that she wanted Christine to understand from her experience and/or motivation to coach, Anouk, another young leader, explained that it was her duty to "give back":

Bien je crois que le fait que j'ai participé en tant qu'athlète c'est ça qui fait que je suis motivée à être entraîneure, que j'ai vécu cette expérience-là on dirait que, puis il y a quelqu'un, même si je n'ai pas toujours été le mieux aidée possible, il y a toujours quelqu'un qui était là pour rendre ça possible puis on dirait que **c'est un peu un devoir pour moi de rendre la pareille aux jeunes**, que ce soit possible puis qu'il y ait quelqu'un qui soit là pour eux, pour les encadrer. Si je n'avais pas participé, je ne crois pas qu'il y a rien qui m'aurait motivée ou poussée à entraîner les jeunes pour les Jeux de l'Acadie parce que ce n'est pas une tâche facile. Ils ne sont pas souvent là. C'est difficile à les rejoindre puis c'est ça. Donc c'est vraiment le fait que j'ai été au Jeux de l'Acadie qui me motive à être là pour d'autres jeunes comme qu'il y en a qui ont été là pour moi.

Interestingly, while the majority of the BGC Ottawa leaders and about half of the JA leaders seemed to be “giving back” to reciprocate, very few (only two) interview participants from the AWG indicated that they were doing their work solely to reciprocate. For example, established leader Morey stated:

**I think it's more I received, so I just want to give back. It's not that I feel that sense of duty or responsibility at all. It's just more, you know, kids aren't active anymore as much like they used to, and it's just, it's a fun way to get kids more involved and active.** And it's not just, you know, participating in sport. It's like volunteering or being part of something larger. Yeah, so I just want to, you know, give them that opportunity to do something that I did.

Morey explicitly states that she does not feel a sense of duty to give back, but rather wants to give young people the same opportunities she had. Why did so few young and established AWG leaders identify with reciprocation compared to leaders from the BGC Ottawa and the JA? We offer some explanations and address implications for sport delivery and suggested paths forward at the end of the next section.

## Responsibility

### What Is It?

Contrary to Mauss, Jonas' (1984) believed that the responsibility people feel towards others is not based on reciprocity. Rather as humans, the need to help is ingrained biologically in our feelings of duty and care towards others who are not able to care for themselves. As Jonas noted in an interview in 1995,

"[I]n contemplating what it means to be a human being we can surely arrive at some ultimate principles about which it is possible to reach a consensus among people who are reasonable and who are inclined to take responsibility. And we are inclined to be responsible: human beings are the only creatures who can take responsibility for their actions and this 'can' in itself make them responsible" (Dönhoff et al., 1995, p. 45).

Schwartz (1993) states that social responsibility is "to act out of commitment to do what one thinks is right, what will promote public welfare, quite apart from whether it promotes one's own. It is to act out of a sense of responsibility as a citizen" (p.337). Wray-Lake and Syvertsen (2011) connect social responsibility to citizenship and add that it motivates certain behaviours rooted in justice and care for others.

Interestingly, like Mauss, Jonas also refers to the concepts of obligation or duty and guilt in his work. For example, while Mauss (1990) felt that obligation is a necessary part of the gift exchange process, Jonas (1984) suggested that concern, fear and guilt coupled with a "thoughtful examination of the conditions of our actions" (Morris, 2013, p. 137) push us to act. In other words, both suggest that negative emotions can drive a person to act. Regardless, of whether it's positive or negative emotions, some of the young and established leaders suggest they do things because they can, which fits with Jonas' assertion that humans can take responsibility, therefore we must.

### How Does It Emerge?

For example, Alexei, a youth worker who runs numerous programs at the BGC Ottawa and attended the BGC Ottawa for over a decade, suggests that the type of person he wants to be is someone who helps people and makes a difference in people's lives.

Personally, for me, I want to be... I'm really community based really. I want to give back in some sort. Help people. I believe in second chances. **I always wanted to help improve people, whether it be children, adults, just make a difference in the person's life pretty much, yeah.**

Alexei's response aligns with Jonas' concept of responsibility because he recognizes that everyone deserves care, and he is in a position (and thus responsible) to give it at this time in his life.

Jill, an established leader for the BGC Ottawa who attended the club as a child and returned to work there in middle adulthood, also spoke of "giving back" not in the context of reciprocity but rather as her responsibility to help children and youth, particularly BGC Ottawa members, who often have less than others (in terms of opportunities, etc..)

So, for me, the grassroots is important because these are kids that really would have hardly any chance in life, right, if it weren't for the resources that were provided here. So giving back to me is just giving those opportunities to these kids and allowing them to see a future and to have access to all these opportunities that I talked about before, like the art galleries and the performances, and the community involvement and all of this, which just allows the kids to see a brighter future, goal setting and academics, and everything that the four pillars offers is very purposeful and it all has the direction of creating good community citizens, but good leaders as well. And so, to me that is

giving back. **It's just giving somebody who doesn't have a whole lot of anything and giving them a world of opportunity.**

Jill's explanation of her action, which is arguably an ethical action, fits within Morris' (2013) reading of Jonas, in which she states

For Jonas, the human being is the only being truly capable of ethical actions, because ethics involves recognizing a good (a form of theoretical reasoning); experiencing a sentiment in relation to the good, such as care, concern, and appreciation; and acting to protect or preserve the good. The being, and the good, of the human are expressed by the capacity for ethical action because this capacity involves all the special human abilities—perception, imagination, reason, the ability to experience and recognize value, and the power to respond in a caring way, transcending the personal (p. 125).

Jill perceives that BGC Ottawa members often have less than others, imagines the possibilities of how she can give them more, reasons that giving them more is the right thing to do and has value and has the power to help give them more.

Leaders from the JA spoke as much about responsibility, for example of transmitting their knowledge to the next generation, as they did feeling the need to reciprocate. They did not reference sharing their knowledge (in the context of giving back) because they had been taught these things, but rather because it was something they had always planned to do. For example, young leader Octave, a spectator, volunteer, multiple sport/multiple year participant, and current coach at the JA stated:

Christine: Qu'est-ce qui t'a décidé cette année, c'est la première fois que tu reviens aux JA à titre d'entraîneur?

Octave: Oui, oui.

Christine: Qu'est-ce qui t'a décidé de t'inscrire comme entraîneur?

Octave: Juste donner mon temps. J'avais toujours eu l'intention de faire ça après ça.  
**Donc donner mon temps, montrer qu'est-ce que j'ai appris, montrer aux nouveaux jeunes, aux plus jeunes.**

Octave stated that he had always intended to come back and coach after he could no longer participate at the games. He claimed that he wanted to pass on his knowledge to the younger generation, which aligns with Jonas' notion (and the concept of generativity) that human beings are responsible to future generations. In yet another interview, when asked why he continued to coach at the JA, young leader Victor, who competed as an athlete in multiple regional games and two Finals, explained that he wanted to pass on his knowledge to others who could then pass it on to the next generation:

Vraiment, j'aime redonner aux jeunes, j'aime leur montrer qu'est-ce que je sais pour qu'eux autres ensuite le transmettent à d'autres personnes.

According to Dusi and De Vita (2019), "taking responsibility means to respond to the call of the other, of the vulnerable who need care and attention from those adults who, in their concern for younger generations, take responsibility on behalf of the world" (p.100). Victor demonstrates, here, that he is doing just this. He suggests that he will respond to the call of others and hopes those he cares for will do the same. In both the BGC Ottawa case (Andrew and Jill), and the JA case (Octave and Victor) some leaders are seemingly not governed by social exchange principles (i.e., reciprocity) and instead suggest that they

“give back” because of the connection they feel to younger generations and their desire to keep their communities flourishing. Perhaps, then, their “giving back” could be reframed as just “giving”.

While we were able to categorize many interview participants’ responses as either reciprocation or responsibility – there were some responses that fit into both groups. For example, Gisèle, an established leader at the SJA, seemed to be referring to reciprocation when she explained that she came back to volunteer for the JA because there was always someone there when she wanted to participate. However, she also suggested that she helps out because she can, thus referring to responsibility:

Moi je me suis toujours dit, moi je fais du bénévolat, **de un, parce que j’adore ça**. J’ai du temps comme je n’ai pas de chum, je n’ai pas d’enfant, ça fait que j’ai le temps de le faire puis j’aime ça. **Puis je me dis, moi, j’ai toujours eu quelqu’un pour moi quand je voulais en faire**. Ça fait que tant et aussi longtemps que je peux donner de mon temps puis que j’aime encore le faire, je vais le faire.

A few JA young leaders also described their “giving back” as both reciprocity and responsibility. For example, young leader Sadie speaks first of reciprocity and second of responsibility when she suggests that it is crucial that the delegation remain “in good hands” and that the youth can live the full experience of the Games.

Christine : Qu'est-ce que tu veux accomplir par ton travail avec les Jeux de l'Acadie, soit à titre d'entraîneure ou sur le comité régional?

Sadie: Bien la première chose **c'est redonner à une organisation qui m'en a donné beaucoup comme jeune**, qui m'a motivée à essayer certains sports, qui m'a permis de rencontrer des gens et tout ça. Ça fait que c'est sûr il y a l'aspect redonner.

Christine: Puis redonner à la Société des Jeux ou à l'école?

Sadie: Aux jeunes. Je dirais c'est plus aux jeunes puis à l'école. Oui, parce que mon travail, tu sais, je veux redonner aux Jeux même si mon travail se rattache plus. Ça fait qu'on dirait que c'est plus ça qui ...

Christine: Les jeunes?

Sadie: Oui. Puis aussi quand moi j'ai été recrutée pour être dans ce comité, tu sais les plus vieux de notre – les plus « vieux », je vais dire ça entre guillemets pour pas leur manquer de respect – mais ils ont 40 ans puis ils cherchent des gens qui seront là quand nous on va avoir cet âge-là, faire sûr que la relève elle est toujours là. **Ça fait que je pense que c'est aussi cet aspect que faire sûr que la délégation est toujours, maintenant la prise en main tout de suite est excellente, mais faire sûr que ça, ça continue, que la délégation soit toujours entre bonnes mains puis que les choses se passent toujours bien au niveau logistique et organisationnel**, pas qu'on n'ait jamais besoin de s'inquiéter de ça mais que l'emphase puisse toujours être mise sur les jeunes en faisant en sorte que tout ce qui se passe derrière ça, ça va bien. Ça fait qu'il y ait une relève à ce niveau-là je pense que ça va toujours... C'est ce qui m'a fait un peu rester et ça me tenait un peu derrière la tête au niveau du comité.

Christine: Um-hum.

Sadie: Je pense que, oui, faire sûr que la délégation c'est peut-être un petit peu plus lié aux Jeux, de faire sûr que la délégation du Sud-est est toujours, pas prête à compétitionner, mais toujours que les jeunes de la délégation puissent, c'est ça, vivre l'expérience à son plein potentiel puis qu'il n'y ait pas de petit hic en quelque part qui vienne nuire en quelque sorte, d'une façon ou d'une autre à l'expérience des jeunes.

Four AWG interview participants suggested they were doing their work solely because of a sense of responsibility. For example, established leader Theresa stated:

So just all because **I know what sport can bring to human beings** and how it can open doors for them, how it can make them feel really good about themselves, how it can physically make them healthier people.

She explained that she “gives back” because she knows the power of sport and the impacts sport can have on people’s lives.

Most interview participants identified with both reciprocation and responsibility. For example, established leader Ree spoke about “giving back” both because she wants youth to experience what she did and because she wants youth to experience something positive and have something to look forward to.

Ree: I'd say both. Like just like you said, **as a youth I loved it, and I want the youth right now to enjoy like what I experience.** It might not be the same but at least they get to experience something. And like I'm sad to say but Nunavut does have a high suicide rate. So, like they look forward to another year each year.

Christine: Mm-hmm. To give them something to look forward to.

Ree: Yeah.

Christine: Okay. And is that where your sense of responsibility comes from?

Ree: Probably. Not 100 per cent, but like that's why we moved.

Christine: Okay.

Ree: High suicide rate. I don't want to tear up, but my son was eight or nine and he said: Mommy, what does suicide mean? So, I said... **So just to give a chance to the youth to experience something and to look forward to something.**

That the AWG young and established leaders simultaneously felt both reciprocation and responsibility is significant to their “giving back” and important to explore.

While we found many references to reciprocity and responsibility (one or the other, or both), we felt that there was something more the leaders were speaking to. The desire to reciprocate or take action due to a feeling of responsibility was often rooted in the negative emotions Mauss and Jonas spoke of. As stated earlier, McCullough, Kimeldorf, and Cohen (2008) argue that positive emotions, such as gratitude, rather than negative emotions, lead to a genuine desire to help a benefactor. To address this, in the next section, we discuss resonance.

## Resonance

### What Is It?

Our deep dive into the literature led us to Rosa’s notion of resonance, which we feel explains some of the leaders’ reasons for carrying out their work. Rosa (2019) suggests that resonance is:

... a kind of relationship to the world, formed through affect and emotion, intrinsic interest, and perceived self-efficacy, in which subject and world are mutually affected and transformed.

It is the opposite of alienation, which is

“a mute, cold, rigid or failed relationship to the world...the result of a damaged subjectivity, social and object configurations that are hostile to resonance, or an imbalance or lack of compatibility in the relation between a given subject and some segment of the world (p. 16).

Like guilt, alienation may push us to act, however, resonance touches us or moves us so that we (figuratively) float or soar in to action. When we act, there is no sense that we should do something because we should reciprocate, because we feel responsible or because we feel dominated, or controlled – instead we are in tune with the world around us, we listen to what needs to be done and we respond by accomplishing the required tasks. Importantly, “resonant relationships...cannot be established in a hostile or indifferent environment, in an aggressive, depressed or constricted mood” (Rosa, 2019, p. 384). Instead, they happen when “our wire to the world vibrates...” (p. 15). Resonance thus seems to be difficult to describe but consists of a feeling a person has in specific moments and is crucial for all people to experience to get the sense of a fulfilled life or a life well lived. Rosa (2019) states that resonance can be elusive and is less likely to occur in situations in which a person perceives stress – which led us to wonder if resonance was possible in the sports and physical activity contexts in this analysis, where competition (often associated with stress) is present. Do the young and established leaders talk about feeling resonance? Is resonance a deep motivation for giving back? If so, is resonance the way forward for helping keep transformational experiences (like BGC Ottawa, JA, AWG) going? Of note, the concept of resonance or resonating has been explored in sport research (see Woods & Davids, 2021), particularly sport psychology (e.g., the resonance performance model, see Arcand et al., 2007; Newburg et al., 2002, etc.). However, the way in which we use it (i.e., based on Rosa’s work) differs because we are not looking at individuals reflecting on their life, subsequently becoming self-aware, and making choices based on this self-awareness to achieve well-being and perform their best. While our version (based on Rosa’s) of resonance shares a fundamental focus on “feel” with Newburg et al’s (2002) version, it does not rely on continued introspection, intentionality, and/or spirituality and is not concerned with performance. It has little to do with reflection and more to do with recognition. Recognition of whether or not a person feels connected, in some way, to the BGC Ottawa, JA or AWG.

### How Does It Emerge?

Resonance was evident from many of our conversations with BGC Ottawa leaders. In fact, we were surprised by the number of times young and established leaders referenced resonance – phrases such as the “BGC Ottawa touched me”, “resonated with me”, “I can’t explain it but something is there” were used often. For example, while speaking about why she got involved with the BGC Ottawa as an adult, established leader Jill spoke about leaving her current work position for employment with an organization that mattered to her:

Christine: How did you reconnect?

Jill: Well, I always knew the club was here, and I had been at my previous job for 10 years, and I was ready for a change. And I just, you know, you never forget your

experience, and so I really wanted something. **It had to be something that resonated with me**, and it had to be something that I was passionate about. And so, in fact when I applied here, I didn't even see the postings the first couple times, and I understood that they were having a hard time finding the right fit. And then I decided to look it up just to see if there was any opportunity, and the perfect opportunity was there, and just everything fell in line. This is where I wanted to be.

I went in and I did my placement, and I fell in love with the organization. And I just love what we stand for. I love that we're able to offer these opportunities...

Established leader Darryl also spoke of getting involved with the BGC Ottawa as an adult because of a feeling he had about the club's work:

Christine: I'm going to ask you to be more specific What is it about the Boys and Girls Club that attracted you so much as opposed to everything you knew already about recreation?

Darryl: Hmm-mmm. **Well, I think it's because the families that we're working with that really touched me for sure.** The communities that we're working in. To me that is something I feel passionate about and something that I thought, yeah, I can maybe make a difference. I can put some of my energies into that.

Both Jill and Darryl identified ways in which working at the club elicited strong feelings. Young and established also described their involvement as fitting with a common phrase associated with the BGC Ottawa – "It's a great place to be". For example, when asked for her take home message about the club, Lauren explained:

Lauren: Wow! What do I want you to take away with? I'm usually pretty good at this. Usually, I have some pretty good one liners. I don't know. The only thing that's going through my head, and it's sort of corny, but it's just that whole **it's a great place to be**. I don't really want to have you leave with that, but I'm trying to think of something more creative, more inspiring.

Christine: That's not a lyric out of a song. But it makes sense.

Lauren: But it's sort of our motto, right? **The Boys and Girls Club is a great place to be.** So yeah, I think that no matter what, the Boys and Girls Club's going to be around for a while. It may have its sort of bumps and bruises along the way, but it's a great place to be. I can't think of something else. I'm going to leave you with that.

Young leader Ahmed also used the phrase:

Christine: What do you want? You've been here for many years. You came as a participant. Now you've been involved since 2003. We're talking 15 years almost, returning as a volunteer and employee. You can call it a volunteer. What do you want the kids to take out? What do you want to be their take-home message from their time here and their participation in your programs?

Ahmed: I think the same thing I had after I looked back in university. It's like that's one place that when I got in, I felt like a second home practically where, and I played sports which I liked, obviously. But then I felt safe that adults were looking for my benefit. Actually, looking after me in a fair and consistent manner. And, I don't know, the same feeling I had when I left. It's like **our motto is this is a great place to be, and I think that's what every employee should actually go for is make every kid to think that this is the best place to be, practically.**

Resonance also occasionally popped up in our conversations with young and established leaders from the JA, when they explained their perspective of what the JA are. For example, young leaders Dominga and Madeleine:

Dominga : C'est juste moi je pense que tous les jeunes devraient avoir la chance d'aller au moins une fois parce que **ça m'a quand même marquée comme je ne sais pas jeune, comme dans ma jeunesse les quatre ans que j'ai eu le plus de fun.** C'est juste tu rencontres des nouvelles personnes, t'apprends des nouveaux sports parce qu'à chaque année il y avait des nouveaux sports qui s'introduisaient bien ils savaient pas que ça existait, comme, c'est juste une expérience que tout le monde comme devrait vivre.

Christine: Il y a quelque chose là-dedans qu'on a de la difficulté à décrire mais qui est important que les autres le vivent.

Dominga : Oui, c'est ça. **C'est juste je ne sais pas**, ça devrait juste être un passage que tous les jeunes devraient passer dedans là.

Madeleine : **C'est dur à expliquer l'ambiance.** Mais une fois que t'arrives là, c'est comme une famille, c'est les gens veulent revenir, les gens veulent vivre l'expérience des Jeux de l'Acadie mais **c'est difficile à expliquer avant que t'arrives là** puis que tu le vois l'ambiance d'être là.

Like the BGC Ottawa, JA leaders often had a hard time putting in words how they would describe the JA. However, they marvelled at how important it is that it continues and that as many young Acadians as possible have the chance to experience it, as participants and as leaders.

Some young leaders spoke getting an indescribable feeling after participating or attending the JA in their youth, one that keeps bringing them back as adults. For example, when asked if there was one thing she felt we should remember about her experience as a participant or volunteer, young leader Jody told us:

Jody: Probablement que les expériences que tu vis comme athlète contribuent fortement à ton expérience que tu vas vivre aussi que tu vas décider d'aller comme bénévole après. Parce que juste les gens que je connais qui sont bénévoles ici, c'est tous des gens que j'ai connus depuis que je suis athlète puis qui ont continué ou que s'ils viennent c'est parce qu'ils ont été athlètes ou qu'ils connaissent des gens qui étaient comme « Aie, j'étais là, c'est vraiment le fun. Viens-t'en. » Comme je trouve qu'il faut un peu que tu vis l'expérience ou que t'aies entendu parler de l'expérience comme vraiment positivement pour pouvoir devenir bénévole. C'est quelque chose que je trouve qui est important, puis aussi quand tu... il faudrait juste que tu viennes une fois. Si tu viens une fois *you're hooked for life kind of thing.*

Christine: **T'as la piqure.**

Jody: **Oui, c'est ça.**

Other young leaders referenced “la piqûre”, too (e.g., Myriam), which suggests the feeling is common.

What about resonance from the AWG leaders? There were a few instances of resonance that captured our attention. Young and established leaders talked about the AWG being fun, that they “just love it”, that “it’s magical” and that “it is indescribable”. For example, established leader Kerstie explains:

*I love it! It is such a... I don't know, and it all started when first going and just having a great time. **And then I just, I don't know**, there's something about that week. It's magical. And you know, sometimes it's chaotic and there's problems and there's this and there's that, but when it all comes back around it's just... it's great.*

Another established leader, one of the few we interviewed who did not participate in the AWG as a youth, Shaun, spoke about getting involved with the AWG because he got being bitten by the (Arctic Winter Games) “bug”:

Shaun: So that's how I got involved. And my involvement I guess I would say, I often tell people **I got bit by the Arctic Winter Games bug**, and that's how I got started; and I've just continued ever since.

He referred to the “bug” numerous times and suggested that once a person gets bitten by the “bug” (usually as participants), they continue to be associated with the Games:

Christine: You talked about getting the bug of the Arctic Winter Games. I understand it had an impact on your relationships and what you felt was the sense of community in Anchorage, but you also said you had the Arctic Winter Games bug. You did not just say then it gave me the idea that we should host other events in Anchorage. What was it about those Games in particular that made you want to keep involved with those Games, even if they're not in Anchorage?

Shaun: The Arctic Winter Games exhibit a huge celebration, and you feel it. It's an energy, **it's an excitement that really transcends from the participants out into the people who are hosting**. All you have to do is watch the opening ceremonies and the look on the youth, their faces, relationships that are already being developed, the cultural diversity. Just the sense of pride in being there is something that is hard to emulate.

And that northern spirit, again it's kind of tough to emulate because this is a premier event, and typically it's held every two years. **So, it's just gratifying. It's just... I don't know how to describe it**. It amazes you and it's at the beginning, but it continues throughout the Games. Events you go to, kids on the street walking, the interaction socially, culturally, competitively, the spirit of camaraderie. You see friendships being developed. And then when you come to the end of the Games, to watch all these kids...

Let me back up. When they come in for opening ceremonies, they come in as each of their team units. It's very orderly. When the Games are closing, they come in en masse. It's just a sea of colour. It's kids literally standing out there, taking off their clothes and exchanging uniforms. **Just... it's crazy! So anyway, it's just, it has an energy that I haven't seen in other places**; and it really is that pride in being a northerner.

Shaun's explanation of "the bug" is similar to Jody's description of the JA. Also like the leaders from both the BGC Ottawa and the JA, Kerstie and Shaun's attempts but inability to describe the AWG suggests there is a "feel" to the Games that many experience – a "feel" that resonates with them over the course of many years. A "feel" that contributed to their desire to "give back" to the AWG.

## **Implications for Sport Program Delivery**

As noted, we did not explicitly ask many of the young and established leaders if they were giving back to reciprocate, because they felt a sense of responsibility or because they felt resonance with the Club or events. We were, however, able to categorize many interview participants' responses as either reciprocity or responsibility, we found some responses that fit into both groups, and we were able to find conversational segments that suggested resonant experiences and relationships. Given that we explored responses from youth and established leaders from three different organizations, context was also an important consideration. More interview participants from the BGC Ottawa (in fact, almost all) referred to reciprocity (with some also referring to responsibility) while only about half from the JA referred to reciprocity and as many to responsibility (again some referring to both). Most interview participants from the AWG identified with both reciprocation and responsibility. There were only a few references to resonance in each case. Therefore, there is a difference between the number of interview participants that refer to reciprocity, those that refer to responsibility, and those that refer to resonance in the three organizations.

Why did each group respond differently? For the BGC Ottawa, there may be a strong sense of obligation to reciprocate towards other members in their attempt to integrate young people into society, because those that joined the club felt marginalized or excluded before they became members, but felt accepted after joining. Furthermore, the BGC Ottawa encourages their members to "give back" to other members as a moral duty/development while they attend the club, even before they become employees or volunteers, while the SJA and the AWG do not explicitly use this in their organizational strategies. However, despite the difference in number of interview participants who frame their "giving back" as reciprocity versus responsibility, we see no clear distinction between the three sets of interviews in terms of how they speak about these categories.

Leaders also might have responded differently because the organizations have different forms of community construction – the BGC Ottawa integrates (often marginalized) youth into larger society, while both JA attempts to retain youth in Acadian communities and the AWG offers Northern youth the chance to come together and, through friendship, celebrate culture and sport. Furthermore, the Acadian community does not describe itself as a political community and the discourse of community seems to build on a shared history and culture rather than on the political will to maintain the shared cultural features (Thériault, 1994). Therefore, there may not be a deep feeling of obligation to reciprocate, but rather a sense that contributing what they can, because doing what they can will help the Francophone community persist. Those from the AWG operate in a context with an added complexity, in that there is an emphasis on the inclusion of Indigenous children and youth. It is possible that notions of reciprocation and responsibility came up together because we asked them specifically about these concepts, because of the political push in Canada to work towards reconciliation or a combination of these and other reasons. We suspect that resonance did not come up as often as either reciprocation or responsibility because our questions were not focused on affect (in the psychological sense of the word), but rather their descriptions of their experiences and actions as members, participants, and/or leaders. That some of the leaders from each case spoke about their feelings or emotions with respect to their work suggests a profoundly resonant experience.

Interestingly, while we expected it to be, age did not seem to be a factor in the way in which young and established leaders from any case were motivated to "give back". This contrasts with much of the volunteer literature, including Ronkainin et al. (2020) finding that coaches at different life stages made

sense of the meaning of their coaching differently. In their study of athletics (track and field) coaches in Finland and England, younger coaches described their work as a hobby and placed high value on personal benefits. Conversely, “older coaches, while also acknowledging the personal benefits of coaching, more often made meaning of coaching within traditional sport volunteering cultural narratives that centralise mutual aid and giving back to the sport” (p. 12). Older coaches thus felt more obligated than young coaches and placed more importance on preserving the community. Why then, do some people see “giving back” as an act of reciprocity? As responsibility? As resonance? It may have to do with social identity and life course rather than age. According to Taylor and Roth (2019), what is important to an individual is shaped by social and cultural narratives or discourses. Perhaps those that refer more to reciprocity (from all organizations) felt set apart because of economic or social marginalization and, after having had others help them feel they belong in society, committed to reciprocating the work to bring the next generation of youth to feel the same social belonging. Perhaps those that refer more to responsibility attempt to ensure the community that gave them so much will persist. Perhaps those that refer to resonance felt the need to reference their strong but unexplainable feelings towards the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG (and people involved).

Why, do we, as researchers, care why they “gave back”? Importantly, looking at young and established leaders’ experiences of community connection and aspects of this connection, such as “giving back”, includes asking questions about the governance of individuals by organizations, such as the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC (and Host Societies, contingents, etc.), and whether these organizations offer a space for leaders to reflect on their place within those environments. For example, does “giving back”, when framed as reciprocity, responsibility, or resonance mean abiding by the organizations’ mission, values, culture or request to “give back”? In other words, are people doing “social good” in order to be a “good citizen” or an “ideal citizen-subject” (see Environics Report; Ilcan and Basok, 2004; Ruschkowski et al., 2019) because they are asked to? Or, on the other hand, do these organizations encourage their leaders to personally reflect and carefully consider their place in the community (within reason – life stories and structural forms shape reflexivity), making giving back more akin to *choosing to be in the process* of “giving back”? Does *choosing to be in the process* of the act of “giving back” help people feel even more connected to the organizations? Determining whether leaders feel required to “give back” or, through reflection and/or reflexivity, actively choose to “give back” (as reciprocity, out of a sense of responsibility or due to feelings of resonance or any combination of these), is important, especially given how young people currently feel about their place in their community and given the broader social transformation in which we seem to be moving from a collective to a more individualistic motivations for non-profit sector work and volunteer activity. Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) claim that close examination of this apparent shift is necessary given that social-structural forces are shaping things, and the consequences are unclear. In other words, many outcomes are possible – for example, reflexively giving back precipitated by individualization (as per Beck 1992) could, perhaps, be used to cement communities back together. By exploring this, we might get closer to understanding what this could mean for future communities and perhaps find ways of fostering this reflexivity in young people through the BGC Ottawa, the JA and the AWG.

As explained above, young and established leaders note that in some organizations and some programs and/or sports, there is a culture of “giving back” whereby current child and youth members or participants are often reminded that it is “what we do” and are expected to “give back” once they age out of participation. However, our reading, based on the expansive review of literature and data analysis we completed for this larger project, is that “giving back” is not about “checking the box” – i.e., “giving back” because a person is supposed to (including if they are paid to), but rather it is most fulfilling and special for volunteers and workers when there is reflexivity and a deep connection with the organizations due to past valuable, positive experiences. Resonance, then becomes one of the most important aspects for the BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC and while it is not possible to create, it is possible to create conditions around which it might happen (see Rosa, 2019). We suggest that our community partners attempt to do

this wherever possible because by creating conditions around which resonance might happen, these organizations may invite or contribute to a larger project of societal transformation through sport.

### **Suggested Paths Forward**

1. **Discuss reciprocity, responsibility and resonance with leaders in training.** Decide what (if any) concept fits best with organizational mission and values.
2. **Create an environment where positive emotions** (such as gratitude) **are celebrated**
3. **Find ways** of setting the conditions **for resonance to occur** – for all involved.
4. **Encourage reflexivity** (at all levels) with respect to reasons for “giving back”

## Discussion

In this report, our goal was to highlight three themes that we hope give our community partners, as well as governments, funders and other scholars, a sense of **how young and established leaders understand their work** (with respect to how it helps children and youth develop), **how they feel while doing this work**, (with respect to sense of belonging and community development) and **why they do this work** (deep motivations). We described how the organizations compared with respect to each theme and suggested some lines of inquiry community partners could pursue. We also strove to address whether leaders in these organizations are reflecting on and reflexive about their actions, a crucial step in the social change process and vital for those wanting to fully experience the human condition.

Overall, we suggest that young and established leaders we spoke with feel that the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG share a devotion to children and youth, are doing good work with children and youth through sport programming and events and continue to be environments in which former participants return to “give back”. Our analysis of what young and established leaders from the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG (and their affiliate organizations) expressed in interviews with respect to youth development, feelings of connectedness and community development, and deep (and arguably reflexive) motivations for doing their work affirms the importance of these organizations in Canadian communities. We emphasize that the sports programs and events our community partners deliver work because they are not geared at producing elite athletes and winning is not paramount for (most) individuals and teams. Instead, their remains a strong emphasis on providing children and youth with valuable life experiences, which, in turn, nurtures communities and contributes to stronger feelings of connectedness for all involved. While the JA works explicitly towards community development, the BGC Ottawa and AWG do not. However, our results show that all three community partners do, indeed, contribute to it. This is important (especially for funders) because it shows that impact is not always related to explicit goals.

That some of the deep motivations for the leaders we interviewed included reciprocation, responsibility, and resonance suggests young and established leaders think reflexively about (reciprocation and responsibility) and deeply feel (resonance) their decisions to pursue volunteer or paid roles in the BGC Ottawa, the JA and the AWG. Community development, then, may be a product of people’s reflexive and affective decisions to “give back”, rather than their attempts to realize an organization’s mission.

We also emphasized that there is contradiction when organizations encourage members and participants to be “good citizens” and fit into existing structures (in other words, socializing them to be compliant and gain skills that are economically productive in the current system), while, at the same time, attempt to challenge problematic aspects of the status quo and power structures that support that system. Organizations that aim to work towards social justice and empowerment, including our community partners, constantly grapple with this contradiction.

As we come to the end of this SSHRC, Sport Canada, and University of Ottawa funded research project, we are convinced that the BGC Ottawa, JA and AWG are offering transformative sports experiences for Canadian children and youth, continue to be relevant for the Canadian sports system and local communities, and must persist. The BGC Ottawa, SJA and AWGIC (and affiliates) currently do sport differently, either because they serve a minority population and want to counteract the discrimination in the broader sport system (and society) or because they know that the sports system needs to be challenged to be “good sport” in today’s sporting context. Like us, they understand that sport is fruitful for community development, but only under certain conditions. The challenge will be for the volunteers and workers staging these clubs and events to continue offering innovative sports experiences, which in our view, requires them to reflexively<sup>30</sup> lean on social justice, empowerment, servant leader and capabilities

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<sup>30</sup> Why, in all “suggested paths forward” sections, reflexivity is a key aspect for organizations to consider (or continue) focusing on.

principles, focus on creating a sense of belonging and community development, celebrate notions of reciprocity and responsibility, and create conditions for resonance to occur.

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## Appendix 1 – Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Position	Young Leader	Established Leader	Former Participant
<b>BCG Ottawa</b>				
Ashton	Director of Programs		X	Y
Jill	Director of Advancement		X	Y
Lauren	Senior Manager Central and West Region		X	N
Darryl	Senior Manager		X	N
Kenneth	Clubhouse Manager Police Youth Centre		X	N
Shawn	Chair, Board of Directors		X	Y
Ahmed	Senior youth worker		X	Y
Salim	Intermediate youth worker	X		Y
Charles	Intermediate youth worker	X		Y
Alice	Intermediate youth worker	X		Y
Jacob	Intermediate youth worker	X		Y
Amil	Intermediate youth worker	X		Y
Alexei	Intermediate youth worker	X		Y
Andrew	Intermediate youth worker	X		Y
Anna	Junior youth worker	X		Y
Mariah	Junior youth worker	X		Y
<b>JA</b>				
Marie-Hélène	Directrice générale à la Société des Jeux de l'Acadie		X	Y
Nadette	Chef de mission (Chaleur)		X	Y
Jérémie	Chef de mission adjoint (Chaleur)		X	Y
Gisèle	Présidente du conseil d'administration		X	Y
Anouk	Entraîneure (athlétisme)	X		Y
Cyril	Employée SJA	X		Y
Dominga	Entraîneur (mini handball, soccer)	X		Y
Eliador	Employée SJA	X		Y
Fernand	Entraîneur d'athlétisme	X		Y
Jody	Accompagnatrice (Sud-est)	X		Y
Julien	Accompagnateur, entraîneur (Kent, athlétisme)	X		Y
Lise	Entraîneure (Sud-est, athlétisme)	X		Y
Malika	Accompagnatrice puis aider avec l'athlétisme (Kent)	X		Y

Myriam	Entraîneuse dans une école à Dieppe et sur le comité régional (Sud-est)	X		Y
Martin	Entraîneur (Chaleur, ultimate frisbee)	X		Y
Madeleine	Employée SJA	X		Y
Nina	Entraîneuse (volleyball), Employée de la SJA	X		Y
Octave	Entraîneur de volleyball	X		Y
Sadie	Médias sociaux	X		Y
Séraphine	Directrice adjointe des bénévoles	X		Y
Valérie	Employée SJA (SEED, du Nouveau-Brunswick)	X		Y
Vanessa	Entraîneuse (Chaleur, athlétisme) bénévole pour les jeux	X		Y
Victor	Entraîneur (Restigouche, l'équipe d'improvisation)	X		Y
<b>AWG</b>				
Constance	Host Society – Arctic Winter Games Advisor Sport, Volunteers, Education & Logistics		X	Y
Shaun	AWGIC Vice President		X	N
Chester	AWGIC Director		X	N
Morey	AWGIC Director		X	Y
Mairin	AWGIC Operations Coordinator		X	N
Jesse	Assistant Coach (NWT, Hockey)		X	Y
Kit	Coach (Alberta, Badminton)		X	Y
Kerstie	Mission Staff (Alaska)		X	Y
Keagan	Chef de Mission (Yukon)		X	Y
Colette	Head Official Arctic Sports		X	Y
Sonia	Mission Staff (Yukon)		X	Y
Theresa	Assistant Chef de Mission (Yukon)		X	Y
Graham	Assistant Chef de Mission, Mission Staff, (Yukon)		X	Y
Terran	Coach (NWT, Basketball)		X	Y
Ree	Coach (Nunavut, Arctic Sports)		X	Y
Ceara	Coach (NWT, Cross Country Ski)	X		Y
Melly	Coach (Alaska, Hockey)	X		Y
Shania	Assistant Coach (NWT Hockey)	X		Y
Tina	Coach (Alberta Speed Skating)	X		Y