

Meeting the Needs of Rural Youth Through Community Innovation: Development
of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre from 2005 to 2013

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ABSTRACT

MEETING THE NEEDS OF RURAL YOUTH THROUGH COMMUNITY INNOVATION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FUSION YOUTH ACTIVITY AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE FROM 2005 TO 2013

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This thesis describes the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre located in a small rural community in Southern Ontario from a social innovation perspective. Social innovation is the driving force behind the mobilization of limited resources that result in this facility that strives to engage and empower youth across all socio-economic demographics through varied after school programming. While the facility provides extensive after-school programming for youth, it also functions as a community hub serving not only the youth clientele but the community as a whole. Semi-formal interviews were conducted with individuals intimately involved with the development of the facility. The interviews were analyzed across six categories selected for their relevance in terms of the viability of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. The description reveals the value of social innovation in meeting the challenges present in the lives of rural youth.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In general, Canada's rural population has declined steadily since 1851. (Martel, 2012) This decline has occurred despite the fact that while the real population of rural Canada has grown, the population growth in urban Canada has been significant enough to lower the percentage of population representing rural Canada within the total population of Canada. (The Daily, 2008) Contributing to the smaller rural population as compared to the urban population is the out-migration of individuals as they seek improved circumstances in an urban setting. A diminishing population can have deleterious impacts on the communities as various services are forced to close when populations can no longer sustain those services. (Burns, Bruce, & Marlin, 2013)

Generally speaking, rural families are less economically advantaged than urban and suburban families. Poverty rates are higher in rural areas than urban areas, and skilled jobs are few and far between. (Pruitt, 2009) The fact that incomes are lower and job opportunities are often scarce in rural areas contributes to the out-migration of rural residents to urban locations. (Burns, Bruce, & Marlin, 2013) "Compared to their urban residents, rural residents tend to have lower education levels, lower levels of literacy, lower incomes, fewer job opportunities, fewer higher paying job opportunities, more seasonal employment, more housing that is in need of repairs, relatively poorer health, and relatively poorer access to health care services." (Burns, Bruce, & Marlin, 2013, p. vii)

Oxford County is demonstrating very slow population growth in the 15 – 24 age group and a declining population growth in the 0 – 14 age group, an indication that the region is not retaining its younger families nor attracting younger families. This type of population growth suggests that Oxford County will eventually experience an overall population decline, resulting in a labour force shortage that will translate to declining employment in the future. (County of Oxford, 2011) Currently, over 50% of 25-64 age group in Oxford County have a high school diploma or less, a problem when you consider that today's labour force requirements are that individuals be increasingly better educated. Individuals aged 15 through 24 are currently experiencing the highest rates of unemployment in Oxford County, suggesting that programs providing job training and work experience for youth will enhance productivity from this population demographic. (County of Oxford, 2011)

Challenges facing rural youth are wide in scope. Rural youth experience lower secondary education expectations than their urban counterparts, and on average are the children of individuals that have lower educational attainments than the parents in an urban context. Rural youth do not experience as much parental involvement in their education and are more likely to come from a single parent household than their urban peer. (Byun, Meece, & Irvin, 2012)

Recent studies have demonstrated that rural youth rates of drug use have not only equalled the rates of use found in urban populations, but have now surpassed the rates of use found in urban areas. Rural youth are now more likely to use alcohol, smokeless tobacco, and tobacco, along with drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamines, and inhalants when compared to their urban peers. (Rhew, Hawkins, & Oesterle, 2011) (Pruitt, 2009) There is a corresponding increased likelihood of increased indulgence in risky behaviours as a result of substance use when compared to urban youth. (Rhew, Hawkins, & Oesterle, 2011) Current studies suggest that lower population densities and greater distances from urban centres contribute to the likelihood that youth will engage in substance use. In other words, the more rural an area, the higher the expectation of substance use. (Rhew, Hawkins, & Oesterle, 2011) While both these studies have been conducted in the United States, it is reasonable to assume that similar findings would be experienced here in Canada. Furthermore, data suggests that in Canada at least, as community size decreases the rate of suicide increases. Rural youth experience higher levels of suicide per capita than do urban youth. (Hirsch, 2006)

Studies demonstrate that peak substance use, or risky behaviour in general, occurs after school and in early evenings on weekdays. (Pruitt, 2009) Possible interventions include after school programming that would ensure that youth have a place to go and something to do, enjoy social engagement in the community, and be subject to adult supervision during the hours when they would be most likely to participate in substance use. (Pruitt, 2009) Afterschool programming (ASP) has been shown to enhance youth development across various domains. Involvement in after school activities has resulted in such positive outcomes as reduced delinquency and increased initiative development. (Larson, 2000) There is evidence to suggest that participation in ASP demonstrates prolonged concentration and improved motivation, attributes that are absent during the more general daily activities of school work and leisure time. (Larson, 2000) Addressing the challenges facing youth within the rural context is difficult. Rural areas usually lack infrastructure, financial resources, and manpower that would be equal to the task of alleviating the hurdles facing rural youth. Geography itself is a challenge as rural individuals frequently must travel lengthy distances to access resources that may present a solution to any issue at hand. (Hirsch, 2006)

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre provides varied afterschool programming and is therefore well positioned to address the complex and interconnected issues that confront rural youth. A complete description of Fusion's development would highlight a rural community's ability to mobilize its resources in order to provide the ASP's that are strongly indicated to promote positive youth development. As previously noted, rural communities face limited financial resources which ultimately results in limited human capital and limited local infrastructure. The development of Fusion will be examined in terms of social innovation at work to overcome some of the many previously enumerated rural impediments.

Problem Statement

The youth demographic in rural areas in Canada is of considerable concern as rural youth generally demonstrate lower levels of education, higher high school drop-out rates and can expect lower incomes. (Cross, 2012) Rural youth have higher all-cause mortality rates than their urban counterparts and are likely to view “their choice to remain in their rural communities as a failure in terms of education and career”. (Cross, 2012) Substance abuse in rural youth has increased at a time when rural areas are seeing a decline in manufacturing, resource extraction, and farming industries. The resulting diminished socioeconomic levels may contribute to the increase in substance abuse as well as presenting significant challenges to rehabilitating the issues. After school programming is shown to enhance youth positive outcomes across various domains when youth are engaged in an activity. This seems particularly true of disadvantaged or marginalized youth. (Dawes, 2011) (Maxwell, 2003)

Against the odds, this rural locale has successfully launched and maintained the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, providing after school programming to rural youth. It can be considered against the odds for the reasons previously outlined; rural environments rarely have access to the resources necessary to implement a project such as the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Providing a description of the development of Fusion could possibly provide an overview of how social innovation resulted in the development of the Centre. An examination of the deployment of the limited rural resources that were available will inform a policy that will enable other jurisdictions to develop similar facilities to address challenges particular to their areas.

Goal

The goal of this research is to describe the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre from its inception up to and including the year 2013 as a product of social innovation. This will be undertaken from a social innovation perspective, examining the social innovation processes at work that culminated in the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Social innovation is the lens applied to understanding Fusion’s development. Specific emphasis will be placed on the mobilization of the limited resources available to the rural community.

Methodology:

Case Study

The case study method was deemed to be the best method of analysis for the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. The description of Fusion meets four distinct characteristics of a case study. Firstly, it is an in depth investigation of the development of Fusion, providing a robust description of the Centre over a specific time frame. Any time an investigation can be said to provide a detailed description of great depth, as opposed to a shallow, wider exploration over many units, it is a case study. Secondly and thirdly, investigating development factors over

a specific time span are two more qualities of a case study. Case studies investigate development over a period of time, ultimately providing an understanding of the “whole.” Finally, case studies are contextualized; they relate the unit of analysis to the environment. Because the investigator sets the boundaries for a case study, the investigator is therefore responsible for setting the context for the case study. (Flyvbjerg, 2011) Case studies are always examined within the physical and social setting; the context is a necessary component of the study. (Miles, Huberman, & Saldanna, 2014)

In this case, local knowledge and resources that were necessary to meet local challenges will be examined. Given that an emphasis will be placed on “place” and tacit knowledge that is tied to “place”, the case study is well suited to document this research. Local individuals intimately involved with the development of Fusion were identified, interviewed, and the resulting data analyzed for an understanding of the evolution of the Centre. The description will give a detailed understanding of the mobilization of resources that propelled Fusion into existence. This analysis will be particularly useful as the resulting description will allow others to understand how the limited resources available to the community were fully utilized to better the community through the development of Fusion. While this case study is limited in that it can only speak to what has occurred at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, in the town of Ingersoll, examining this case study will provide others with an understanding of how to situate themselves within their own community and draw on their own particular strengths and resources to replicate the community betterment that has been observed here.

The Case:

the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre
Ingersoll, Ontario

Located in southwestern Ontario, the County of Oxford is at the junction of Highways 401 and 403 and is approximately 150 kilometres west of Toronto. A blend of urban and rural communities, the County is made up of eight area municipalities. Oxford County’s municipalities are Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, Ingersoll, Norwich, South-West Oxford, Tillsonburg, Woodstock, and Zorra. (Oxford County Council, 2013) Woodstock, Ingersoll, and Tillsonburg are the largest urban centres within the County and the regional governing body is located in Woodstock. Oxford County has a diverse economic base that includes manufacturing, agriculture, some resource based industries such as aggregate production, and a significant number of small businesses.

In 2004, action planning groups initiated by the Ingersoll Town Council through their development of the Community Strategic Plan identified youth as an area of focus. Youth Planning Groups were convened to examine the needs of youth within the community and a number of outcomes were suggested. One of those outcomes was to establish a fully funded and professionally supervised youth centre to meet the diverse needs of local youth. In 2005, the

Ingersoll Thames Centre opened its doors and in 2006, the Ingersoll Thames Centre became known as the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre.

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, also referred to in this work as Fusion or the Centre, currently employs 22 individuals in varying capacities, to deliver various programs geared to the local youth. Three social enterprises are delivered out of Fusion, those three enterprises being: Multimedia Production, the ReBuild It computer services, and Digital Sound Production. Along with the three social enterprises, Fusion offers other programming as well. The Fusion centre also has an Ingersoll Youth Advisory Council that speaks to the Ingersoll Town Council and the Ingersoll Youth Action Committee on matters that pertain to youth in the area. (Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Center, 2010) For a complete list of programming available through the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, please refer to Table 1 located in Appendix 1. Table 2 represents the current social enterprises available at the Centre, also located in Appendix 1.

Social Innovation and After-School Programming

Larson suggests that initiative is at the core of positive youth development. Afterschool programming, or structured activities that do not require mandatory participation, can best provide the environment where there is are levels of both intrinsic motivation, a precursor to the development of initiative, and challenge. (Larson, 2000) Larson defines initiative as “the ability to be motivated from within to direct attention and effort toward a challenging goal” and elaborates on the importance of initiative by discussing initiative as a foundational component in the development of creativity, leadership, altruism, and civic engagement, all elements found in positive youth development. (Larson, 2000) There are elements of initiative, such as intrinsic motivation that occurs when the individual is invested in an activity and completely engaged in the present moment along with a prolonged attention to the activity. “Intrinsic motivation represents the motivation to engage in an activity purely for the sake of the activity itself.” (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011)

Initiative occurs over time, it demonstrates an ability to withstand setbacks and obstacles and persevere towards a goal. Importantly, Larson argues that initiative is best nurtured through daily life experiences. The most common daily life experiences for youth today include school work and unstructured leisurely activities. Unfortunately, he notes that youth experience a high level of attention and challenge during schoolwork and homework, but a very low level of intrinsic motivation. During unstructured leisurely activities, he observes that youth experience high levels of intrinsic motivation but low levels of challenges or mental stimulation. He suggests that structured, voluntary activities best provide an environment whereby positive youth development can occur. (Larson, 2000)

There is a significant amount of available research on intrinsic motivation; however Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi have investigated the impact of “direct attention,” an element found in Larson’s definition of “initiative”. It is their suggestion that “the degree to which the potential rewards of ongoing activity engagement are realized would seem to be dependent on the degree to which attentional resources are devoted towards these potential rewards.” (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2011) As a pertinent aspect of the experience of enjoyment of a goal oriented activity, it would seem that Larson is right to include directed attention in his definition of initiative and it is a salient aspect of successful youth programming. Intrinsic motivation and attention, applied over time, as occurs in the case of involvement in ASPs is shown to result in positive youth development. (Larson, 2000) Involvement in structured activities has demonstrated positive youth outcomes such as reduced involvement in delinquent activities, increased self-esteem, increased educational outcomes and aspirations, along with a sense of greater control over the individual’s life. (Larson, 2000)

Research does suggest that mentoring relationships result in positive youth outcomes across various domains. It also suggests that high quality mentoring relationships will result in greater positive youth outcomes than will low quality mentoring relationships. (Schwartz, 2013) Furthermore, research suggests mentoring relationships can impact the development of youth identity, impacting their understanding of “who they might become” in the future. Mentoring positively impacts their understanding of their potential selves. (Schwartz, 2013) It may be the case that it would be difficult to unravel the relationship between positive youth outcomes and high quality mentoring relationships and ASPs. It is possible that the mentoring relationships are predictive of positive youth outcomes in part because they are found within the infrastructure of community assets such as ASPs. (Schwartz, 2013) With that in mind, some work is being done to investigate the relationships between being involved in a given activity and being involved in an activity that includes enjoying a quality mentoring relationship. Preliminary evidence would suggest that there is a greater positive youth outcome associated with having a mentoring relationship while involved in the activity as opposed to simply being involved in the activity, however, it appears that a high quality mentoring relationship found while engaged in an activity is predictive of positive youth development for the prosocial skills variable alone as opposed to a variety of positive youth development variables. (Schwartz, 2013)

What seems more indicative of high quality mentoring relationships is the perception that a community values youth. The perception that you are a member of a supportive community demonstrates positive youth development across a number of variables, not simply the development of prosocial skills. Positive youth development is associated with youth participation in structured activities, awareness of inclusion in a supportive community, and involvement in mentoring relationships. (Schwartz, 2013) The very nature of ASPs provides an opportunity for greater community asset development as the presence of ASPs suggest a caring community. ASPs can further enhance positive outcomes in the community provided that caring

adults populate the programs and are therefore in a position to mentor youth and are willing to mentor youth. (Schwartz, 2013) The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre was initiated by the community in response to an identified need for greater attention to youth, a need identified by the community. This would certainly seem to represent a caring community.

Dawes work on theory development for understanding how youth get engaged supports the premise that successful ASPs require that youth be psychologically invested in the program, that the youth must develop a personal connection to the program in question. (Dawes, 2011) Preliminary theory work suggests that youth become engaged in an activity through three types of personal connections. Youth may become engaged as they realize they are learning for the future, that they are working to a future goal. They may become engaged as they understand that they are developing a personal competence. This is an in-the-moment experience as they develop a product, frequently in the short-term, for an example, an art form, a play, a computer program. Thirdly, youth become engaged in activities whose purpose transcends the individual, programs with moral or perhaps civic goals as an example. (Dawes, 2011) Dawes work draws heavily on work by Larson and Csikszentmihalyi as discussed, and also serves to highlight some of the ambiguity surrounding the impact of mentoring relationships identified by Schwartz, also previously discussed. The presence of positive adults that facilitate these programs is an opportunity for youth to develop meaningful, positive relationships that will further enhance positive youth development, but to what extent their presence and role impacts positive youth development seems somewhat unclear.

Work has been done to understand the impact that ASPs may have on rural youth. Previous work on the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre suggests that the Centre provides an environment conducive to positive youth development across the domains present in the YES. (Youth Experience Survey) (Khan B. , 2012) While ASPs can be shown to enhance positive youth development, Khan's (Khan B. , 2014) work expands on Khan's previous work by suggesting that the culture found at the Centre contributes to youth development. The relationships formed between caring adults populating Fusion and the youth members provide a foundation that facilitates positive youth development. (Khan B. , 2014) The work done by Cross suggests that there is a connection between youth health and well-being and attendance at the Centre. (Cross, 2012) Physical health was described as experiencing a healthy body, sound nutrition, physical activity and an avoidance of substance use. Mental well-being included positive self-esteem, positive relationships and a sense of connectedness and belonging and enjoying a sense of purpose in life. (Cross, 2012) Youth identified engagement in the varied programs and services at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre as a factor in a sense of well-being. (Cross, 2012) Christie's work on inclusion and exclusion indicates that attendance at the Centre positively impacted youth in terms of feeling included. Youth indicated that they could afford the Centre, it was accessible and that it was an environment of acceptance. (Christie, 2012) The low \$5.00 membership fee made the Centre highly accessible for all youth.

Furthermore, the central location ensured most youth could walk to the Centre. Fusion is described as a place for youth where they can connect with friends and peers and access networks and support for help with any issues or obstacles. It has a family atmosphere where they are accepted. Fusion is described as an environment where youth can come together, be themselves, and explore different programs and activities. (Christie, 2012)

Significance of the Research

A complete description of the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre and the socially innovative factors in that development could have implications for future policy for youth, particularly marginalized youth in rural environs. Through its varied after school programming, Fusion seems to both support the Canadian federal government in its targets of developing social innovation in the social fabric of Canada, and employers increasingly concerned about the lack of “social learning” as a component of the employable individual through the implementation of its afterschool programming. (Maxwell, 2003) A thorough description of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre development and social innovation process that occurred can provide a working model that can be exported to other communities throughout Canada and elsewhere that seek to include rural youth in the creation of viable, sustainable, and economically successful rural communities.

Describing the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre can also provide an insight into questions around positive rural youth development and positive rural community well-being. This research can ground contributions to the study of social innovation as it impacts youth development, labour force development, community asset development, and economic development. Following the advice of Honourable Deb Mathews, then Minister of Children and Youth Services, a description of the development of the Fusion Youth and Activity Technology Centre is a necessary component of documenting the social impact delivered by the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. (Fusion Youth Centre and University of Guelph Research Study Advisory Committee Background Information) This descriptive process will provide leverage points that other locales may utilize in order to develop their own institutions in which they too may address similar issues that have faced youth within their jurisdictions. Irwin Elman, Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth Services has suggested that the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre is a “model for the province.” (Fusion Youth Centre and University of Guelph Research Study Advisory Committee Background Information)

Limitations and Assumptions

This work will be limited by the fallible human memory, and the biases found in every individual. Because this work is a descriptive process, it is subject to the vagaries of the perceptions of those individuals interviewed. Personal biases and personal interpretations will be embedded within the reporting process. However, these biases and personal interpretations will be offset by document review and corroborating statements through interviews with multiple

individuals. Coherence and integrity will be supported by paying attention to the perceptions of multiple individuals and broad ranging document review that will illuminate differences and similarities in the descriptions provided.

As a descriptive work, the work could be limited by the analysis process. Some analysis will work directly from the audio recordings, and some analysis will include transcriptions of the audio recordings. This layered analysis process provides coherence through attention to the context of the audio recordings and verification of the meanings through attention to the words utilized in the descriptions.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

All the literature utilized will be grounded in social innovation theory. The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre is assumed to be a result of social innovation and to be perpetuating social innovation. Analyzing “place”, the value of tacit knowledge, and community assets and resources will focus attention on the deployment of the local reserves that occur in the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Pertinent literature will also look at social innovation in terms of networking, mentorship processes, role modelling and various other facets of community relationship building and collaboration that lead to successful innovation. After-school programming, a characteristic of a supportive community and a key component of Fusion, will be examined in terms of social innovation at work.

What is Social Innovation?

A Brief History

It would be safe to say that social innovation has been quite evident over the last two centuries, and probably longer. There have been a number of social innovations over the last two hundred years, and it can be said that, often, social policy began as radical innovation. For example, the idea of a national health service as a service available at no charge to all individuals was once thought to be a pipe dream. The development of trade unions and collective insurance bodies that protect the individual against unforeseen difficulties can all be said to be social innovations. However, social innovation is not restricted to social policy. Social innovation is evident in banking, for instance, the Mondragon Co-operatives, in utilities such as the Welsh/Glas Cymru, and other domains such as finance and agriculture. It is not at all uncommon for initial social innovation movements to be met with resistance. For example, feminism in general and the civil rights movement in the USA could be said to have been met with some hostility. Social movements, civil society, religion, individuals, and even governments can be found to be the impetus for social innovation. Government built school systems and welfare states in the later 1900s, and the anti-slavery movement in Britain in the late 18th century highlight how long and varied is the history of social innovation. (Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007) Benjamin Franklin is said to have been the catalyst for a number of social innovations, such as Gentlemen’s Clubs and the police force. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) It is evident that social innovation is done by many, individuals, organizations of many varieties, movements, and governments and this persists even today. But what is social innovation, exactly?

Definition:

The understanding and resulting description of Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre is undertaken from a social innovation framework. The OECD or Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development defines innovation as “Innovation is new or significantly improved

products or processes introduced to the market.” (Maxwell, 2003) However, innovation is often thought to be more than simply something new coming to market, but rather is the dynamics that are at play between stakeholders as these new concepts or products come to fruition. (Maxwell, 2003) (Cavalli, 2007) Many new products are developed, concepts are proposed, paradigms are debated, but social innovation is the element that will frequently make the difference between the success and failure of a new product or concept. But still the question, what is social innovation?

Many working definitions for social innovation imply that social innovation represents a new method or idea leading to the betterment of human well-being. Furthermore, it is frequently the case that marginalized groups are the main beneficiaries of social innovation. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) As there does not seem to be a consistent definition of social innovation, the generalized definition proposed by Pol and Ville (Pol & Ville, 2008, p. 4): “an innovation is termed a social innovation if the implied new idea has the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life,” seems a good starting point for a useful definition of social innovation. Pol and Ville’s definition expands the definitions provided by Maxwell and Cavalli by incorporating the idea of public betterment when they speak to the “potential to improve either the quality or quantity of life.” (Pol & Ville, 2008, p. 4) A support to this definition of the complex matter of social innovation is Denning’s definition of innovation, that an innovation is a transformation of practice within communities. (Denning, 2004, p. 18) Neumeier’s definition incorporates both Pol and Ville’s definition and Denning’s definition when he defines social innovation as “changes of attitudes, behaviour, or perceptions of a group of people joined in a network of aligned interests that in relation to the group’s horizon of experiences lead to new and improved ways of collaborative action within the group and beyond.” (Neumeier, 2011, p. 55)

Neumeier goes on to suggest that social innovation is not the measurable improvement itself but rather the changes observed in the perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes of the stakeholders that made room for the improvement. (Neumeier, 2011) Neumeier’s (2011) definition is most useful as we consider whether the research will show that the development of Fusion has changed some practices within the community that has led to improved collaborative action within the community. While it is true that Fusion is what is being described, it is the processes and practices that resulted in the development of Fusion that are revealed in the descriptive process.

The Process of Social Innovation

McElroy suggests there is a component of intellectual capital that is not fully appreciated. This component is coined “social innovation capital” and refers to the social capital that is held by a collective, as opposed to the individual. (McElroy, 2002) In this case, social capital is defined as “the capacity for people to lever their social connections to advantageously gain access to resources to better use the firm’s own resources.” (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) This is a good definition in that it is simple and highlights the relational aspect of the social capital and broadly contextualizes the concept. McElroy deviates from the mainstream allocation of “innovation

capital” as a component of structural capital as found in the highly regarded Skandia AFS Navigator model of intellectual capital management where “innovation capital” is characterized as tangible products such as patents, copyrights, or trademarks. Instead, McElroy lines up squarely with Neumeier and Denning when he suggests that “innovation capital” can be thought of as a process, not simply work outputs. (McElroy, 2002)

Mulgan et al. (2007) identifies four stages of social innovation.

Stage One: an identification of an unmet need accompanied by a possible solution.

Unmet needs are identified in many ways, but a grounding principle of social innovation is that people are generally capable of understanding their own situations and developing a relevant solution to that situation.

Stage Two: put the idea into practice.

It is often the case that social innovations are implemented quickly, and this quickness to market, for want of a better term, speeds up the evolution of the idea. The experience or visibility of the new idea is as likely to garner support for the idea as well or better than a written proposal or advocacy action. The final solution rarely looks exactly like the initial offering, but it is through the actual implementation process that flaws are corrected and a final, effective product evolves.

Stage Three: growth and diffusion

This occurs when a local idea is proven to be effective locally. The idea can then be replicated, adapted, franchised, or simply organically grown. Strategy and vision facilitate growth at this stage, and it is at this point that we can identify the need to deploy resources and identify leverage points. This stage is one of the more difficult aspects of social innovation for many reasons, but in general terms, for lack of key individuals that possess the skill set to grow the idea. It is frequently the case that the originator of the idea does not possess the skills required to grow and diffuse the concept.

Stage Four: learning and adapting

As previously mentioned, the final idea may look very different from the original concept. Unexpected uses of the idea may be revealed through the implementation of the idea. Mulgan et al suggest that processes of innovation are in essence “types of learning”. As these ideas are formalized, “best practices” are identified, core principles of the idea are communicated, and ultimately, the idea is utilized in new contexts. As the idea or concept moves into new contexts, the learning processes are repeated.

Social innovations have 3 key characteristics. Social innovations are rarely wholly new ideas but are instead combinations of existing concepts. Implementing a social innovation usually involves crossing disciplinary boundaries and tapping into novel resources found within these previously unrelated collaborators. Social innovations leave in their wake new relationships

between previously disparate entities. These new relationships are valuable and powerfully impact the success of the innovation and the subsequent diffusion of the innovation. (Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007)

Neumeier seems to recognize these characteristics when he offers key concepts relating to the process of innovation. He suggests that social innovation only occurs as a collaborative act and that they evolve in collaborative acts. (Neumeier, 2011) This is a significant concept as this inherently suggests that social innovation is necessarily a function of social networks, or social capital. This should sound eerily similar to Mulgan's fourth stage of development and his assertion that innovation is multidisciplinary. Neumeier goes on to point out that there is always a trigger for social innovation and that social innovation builds on relative novelty, meaning new to the individuals involved. (Neumeier, 2011) It is possible that the innovation is not wholly new, but new in the situation that it is being used, much as Mulgan suggests when he indicates that social innovation is a hybrid of existing ideas in his identification of 3 key characteristics of social innovation. Furthermore, Neumeier's identification of a social innovation trigger takes into account the newly formed relationships that Mulgan identifies as not only important to the stakeholders but critical to the success of the innovation. As previously noted, Neumeier aligns himself with Denning when he indicates that social innovation focuses on changes in attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions. His focus on the practices or processes takes him even further away from the material outcomes when he stresses that the material outcomes of social innovation are a supplementary result. (Neumeier, 2011)

Social innovations are a valuable component of neo-endogenous rural development. In fact, Neumeier questions whether the neo-endogenous rural development can persist without the presence of social innovation. He argues that a shift in development strategies can be observed in most developed, democratic, capitalist, industrial countries and funding is now being directed towards territorial development as opposed to sectoral development. He goes on to observe that evaluations of various rural development programs indicate the importance of local knowledge, regional identity, and social networks in the production and evolution of social innovations. (Neumeier, 2011)

Social Innovation and Place-Based Policy

Research in social innovation in Canada done by Maxwell (2003) and Goldenberg (2004) will provide some guidance for the descriptive process. Social innovation occurs when all members of a community come together to address an issue facing the community. It is characterized by the voice of all members of a community, including those considered disadvantaged in some way, engages tacit knowledge that is utilized to address the issue, and occurs in a "place" that is common and accessible to all. (Maxwell, 2003) (Goldenberg, 2004) Maxwell argues that there is a lack of attention paid to tacit knowledge, that is, the knowledge generated by individuals in the same room brainstorming, networking, and generally communicating with each other, simply

sharing knowledge. Individuals involved in tacit learning must share a common language and a common appreciation for the issue at hand. These individual “clusters” of knowledge, also referred to as “social learning” figure prominently in the success or failure of the innovation at hand. “Social learning” also brings the notion of “place” to bear on policy as “social learning” or “clusters” require “face-time.” (Maxwell, 2003) If innovation occurs as a result of social processes under the conditions as noted above, then “place” is a necessary condition of social innovation. A description of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre may also speak to “place”, not just as a location of “social learning” but as an important aspect of well-being. Rural youth overwhelmingly identify with a strong sense of community when compared to the urban counterparts. (Cross, 2012) (Statistics Canada, 2013)

Goldenberg’s support of the value of tacit knowledge and the importance of place, implicit in tacit knowledge, coupled with Maxwell’s work suggesting that tacit knowledge, place, and afterschool programming as a key to social innovation, clearly highlights the value of place-based policy. By coming together in a place, there can be a dialogue leading to innovation. Social innovation, as a process, requires that individuals meet face to face to discuss the challenge at hand. (Maxwell, 2003) Traditional policy is generally applied in a top down format, fulfilling a government mandate that all citizens must be treated equitably and that resources must be distributed in such a manner that equality for all is achieved. Place based policies tend to evolve in a bottom up fashion and are informed by local knowledge. They cross disciplines, sectors, institutions, social organizations, occasionally jurisdictions, and draw upon local resources to fulfill and sustain their mandates. This cross collaboration ethos, by its nature, suggests a dynamic network of stakeholders working together to build vital communities. Goldenberg (2004) also suggests that ultimately these place based policies will require “new forms of multilevel governance.” Although what that will look like is somewhat unclear at this time.

Place is also where we access our resources, be they natural resources or human resources and as the nature of those assets change, so too does the place. Place is where we access services, where we undertake governance, and ultimately, form identities. (Reimer, 2008) Furthermore, understanding the “place” is relevant to determining the assets and services that are available to meet the challenges along with the governance that oversees the “place”. Identities are formed in “places”, and these shared identities are the foundation for the capacity to act in pursuit of desired change. Lack of attention to “place” and the connectedness between those individuals and “place” may result in a poor understanding and utilization of the social assets and human capital that is available to meet the challenges. Local knowledge, found in “place”, and used to drive policy development redistributes control of policy processes from external forces to local priorities and initiatives. (Reimer, 2008)

Intriguingly, work done by Perez-Luno et al. (2011) suggests that tacit knowledge positively affects radical innovation only when coupled with external social capital. Their work also suggests that complex tacit knowledge will more positively impact social innovation, even without the presence of external social capital. The impact of external social capital underscores the importance of cross discipline collaboration and refers back to Mulgan et al.'s (2007) emphasis on the value of the new relationships formed among previously disconnected entities. (Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007) This characteristic of social innovation will be more closely reviewed when relationships are addressed.

“Place” is pertinent to the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre as the Centre is a product of “place” and responds to “place”. Goldenberg identifies community based organizations as vital to the proliferation of social innovation as a result of the tacit knowledge held by the human resource that serves within the organization. Cross sector collaboration along with the implied flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness as necessary ingredients of cross sector collaboration is a component of innovation. (Goldenberg, 2004) While Goldenberg concerns himself predominately with Not-for-Profits, many characteristics of these grass roots community organizations can be identified within Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Not-for-Profits generally are difficult to categorize as these organizations frequently exist with close ties to both private and public sectors, drawing upon resources from both sectors in order to sustain and expand in community outreach. Some of the key characteristics of the Not-for-Profit sector include but may not be limited to:

- ✚ Non-profit or Not-for-Profit organizations are “non-governmental” in that they are institutionally separate from government, although they may and do receive government funding.
- ✚ They are autonomous and self-governing, controlling their own activities.
- ✚ They have some degree of formal organization and internal structure and governance.
- ✚ While they may accumulate a surplus in any given year, they are “non-profit” in that they generally do not distribute any profits they generate back to their owners or directors; instead, any surplus is plowed back into their basic mission and activities.
- ✚ They are “voluntary” in that they have a meaningful degree of volunteer participation in their operations and management, on their board of directors and/or through volunteer staff and contributions.
- ✚ And, perhaps most importantly, the organizations exist to serve a public benefit and purpose and respond to a public need. (Goldenberg, 2004, p. 6)

Maxwell claims that there is a ‘place’ dimension to well-being. Some places, such as Kanata and Kitchener-Waterloo, have implemented policy to accelerate industrial innovation, and have

created dynamic environments for industry. Places that implement social policy may ameliorate existing or trending situations of distressed populations such as can be found in failing neighbourhoods or rural/small communities. (Maxwell, 2003) Policy grounded in social innovation addresses those who might be most impoverished and in so doing, enriches the general society by enabling the marginalized and the alienated to contribute meaningfully to general society. (Maxwell, 2003) (Larson, 2000) Places are where youth learn social skills, learn to resolve disputes, and take on leadership roles, all significant contributors to positive youth development as well as fulfilling the employability criteria as designated by employers. (Maxwell, 2003) Development of these social skills does not necessarily occur in the classroom. Youth need safe places where these developments can occur, in other words, good recreation centres. Recreation, in this sense, is not simply a place for physical activity, although this is certainly a component of recreation, but rather a venue that provides arts programs, technology programs, and other various programs that allow youth to mature and expand. These places, where this activity might flourish, must be safe and must be accessible to all socio-economic backgrounds. (Maxwell, 2003)

Social Innovation and Networking/Relationships

Networks can be defined as a set of nodes and links. The nodes may be represented by a plethora of entities such as individuals, machines, and so forth. The links identify or represent the relationships between the nodes and may be one-way or mutual (two-way). (Denning, 2004) Denning goes on to suggest that innovations spread through the social network of a community as an idea for a new practice is spread from one individual to another through the links. The idea is either accepted or rejected, and innovation is most likely to spread if the idea is accepted and passes on through more nodes and links. (Denning, 2004) Locating the hub of the network to be influenced and understanding that spreading innovation is a skill that must be developed as one would any other skill are key elements in a meaningful attempt to spread innovation. Successful innovations are facilitated by having a meeting place where stakeholders can come together to co-operate, collaborate, and interoperate. (Denning, 2004) Once again, the idea of place as meaningful to successful innovation is evident. Successful innovation is understood to have occurred when the innovation in question has been adopted and enjoys widespread recognition and use. When social innovation has succeeded, all actors have not only effected change, they themselves have been affected by the change. (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006)

Networks frequently have no central authority and the smaller groups within a network assume responsibility for action and reaction. These smaller groups have the capacity to direct a network towards a goal, and to react to the outcomes of the move. As networks increase in size, there is a tension between the wide ranging responsibility and capacity of the smaller groups and the traditional element of localized control. (Denning, 2004) An appropriate response to this tension is the distribution of a central intent or strategy from the central hub to the smaller groups; giving those groups the autonomy to deliver the strategy locally as well as having the

smaller groups provide feedback to the central hub where information is processed into new intents or strategies. (Denning, 2004) This strategy supports Bhatt and Altinay (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013, p. 1786) that “greater involvement of the target beneficiaries or development of the beneficiaries’ (or customer) social capital could ensure successful development and scaling of a social innovation. The various groups involved in the process should have a voice and some autonomy. The intricacy of social innovation is that while actors are compelled to act to effect change, they cannot claim full responsibility for the resulting effects of those actions. (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006) When reviewing social innovation, it is impossible to undervalue the role played by the catalyst for change, but the fact that the actions undertaken had power because the system was ready to change cannot be undervalued either. (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006)

“Relationships are key to understanding and engaging with the complex dynamics of social innovation.” (Westley, Zimmerman, & Patton, 2006) Cavalli’s (2007) work looking at the relationship between social innovation and meaning in the community will lend an important perspective on the development of successful innovation. On the one hand, successful innovation is reliant on shared values and meanings within the community, and the relationships between the stakeholders that facilitated the development of successful, or unsuccessful, innovation. However, social innovation is predominately a social fact and successful institutions pay attention to the symbolic process of innovation. (Cavalli, 2007) To that end, Cavalli seeks to identify “a set of concepts that can be used in the empirical research to give an account of social and communicative dimensions in the innovation process.” (Cavalli, 2007) The following criteria are but a few of those characteristics that can be used to identify a discourse community:

- ✚ The existence of a broadly agreed set of common public goals
- ✚ A mechanism of intercommunication among its members
- ✚ The use of its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback
- ✚ The use of and, hence, possession of one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims
- ✚ A threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discourse expertise (Cavalli, 2007)

What is relevant is “that for an innovation to be successful, the presence, birth, or the change of a discourse community can be recognized.” (Cavalli, 2007) Here, we once again see the echo of the definition of social innovation, that being change within a discourse community. While Cavalli (Cavalli, 2007) primarily is concerned with the introduction of technology into a discourse community, and the ensuing communication processes that move that piece of technology from a simple invention to an innovation, we can review those same processes in terms of the introduction of a new program or a new social good such as a youth facility, that becomes a successfully innovative centre or a successfully innovative program within a discourse community. Cavalli (Cavalli, 2007) further suggests that understanding the

communicative genres within the discourse community can reveal the innovation processes that occurred throughout the development of the Centre.

Building on the power of value of relationships within a community is the research that suggests the external social capital is also critical to social innovation. It further “indicates that there is a clear interrelationship between network connectivity and the quality of the innovation ideas created.” (Bjork & Magnusson, 2009) To increase the innovation capacity or to increase the amount of high quality innovation ideas produced, individuals need to connect with other individuals inside and outside of the affected company, or in this case, a community, this ability to connect should be supported and facilitated, all while maintaining the integrity of the existing network. (Bjork & Magnusson, 2009) Bhatt’s work suggests that this increased connectivity will also assist in overcoming resource constraints. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013)

Neumeier’s work identifies cross sector collaboration to overcome local obstacles when he talks of actors from community politics, tourism, and agriculture coming together to build a development model that would harmonize tourism with nature conservation. (Neumeier, 2011) Not only was external social capital leveraged, the impetus for the local development was external as well. Neumeier’s example gives evidence of changes in attitudes and behaviours found in the local stakeholders’, the target groups was actively involved, there was extensive cross collaboration over communities which was new in the experience of the local stakeholders’, and the idea spread, bringing new stakeholders to the table. (Neumeier, 2011)

The work done by Perez-Luna et al. contributes to the idea of external social capital as a significant contributor to successful innovation by showing that external social capital has a positive impact on radical innovation and that the presence of external social capital will capitalize on higher levels of knowledge tacitness resulting in a positive effect on radical innovation. (Perez-Luno, Medina, Lavado, & Rodriquez, 2011) This newer research on social capital and social innovation also highlights the cautionary tale that many researcher have uncovered, that occasionally, when social capital is very strong, communities can become insulated from outside forces. (Perez-Luno, Medina, Lavado, & Rodriquez, 2011) (Florida, Cushing, & Gates, 2009) Not only are these communities likely to become complacent in their existence, the strong ties enforce conformity within the community. These communities then become less likely to recognize or respond to outside challenges. (Florida, Cushing, & Gates, 2009) Research is showing that creative individuals are congregating in areas with low social capital where they fit in but are likely to find challenges to their ideas. (Florida, Cushing, & Gates, 2009)

Social Innovation and Funding

Discussions of social innovation would be incomplete without some consideration to funding. Rural communities frequently face resource constraints, as previously noted in the introductory

passages. Under these conditions, funding is at a premium, often very difficult to acquire. Municipalities increasingly must embrace the concept that they will be called upon to make up the differences in funding shortfalls as higher level governments cut back on spending. Municipal government support for social entrepreneurship (or civic entrepreneurship) is often thought to be a successful approach to strengthening communities as these types of individuals or organizations lead the attacks on local challenges. (Korosec & Berman, 2006) Aside from the obvious support of funding through municipal taxation and assistance in grant acquisition, it is also possible that clear municipal tax support can be leveraged to acquire higher level government support. Municipal government can support social entrepreneurship endeavours in other ways as well. Municipalities can increase community awareness of issues being addressed by these social or civic entrepreneurs. Municipalities can provide enhanced networks which in turn can support program development and co-ordination. (Korosec & Berman, 2006) This is in evidence when in El Paso, Texas the mayor recognized fragmented community sustainability efforts and convened a workshop to address the fragmentation. This resulted in a collaborative body of diverse members dedicated to advancing and streamlining the “green” efforts of the many members. (Okubo, 2010) The sustainability program manager for the city of El Paso is highly visible in the community, meeting with residents and organizations alike, maximizing methods of getting the word out to the community. Activities and meetings that inform, educate, collaborate, and impact the community are instrumental to the success of the community goals of sustainability. (Okubo, 2010)

Some drawbacks to municipal involvements in these grassroots efforts to address local ills include a resistance to power sharing. Occasionally, public figures wish to retain control of their pet issues. Biases, concern for what programs are funded with public money, distrust of organizations’ agendas, policies, or managerial tactics, legal or contractual vulnerabilities may be evident, or proposed initiatives that step on the toes of existing programs all can inhibit successful municipal support for innovative initiatives. (Korosec & Berman, 2006) These previously outlined municipal concerns for innovative initiatives are generally found in developed, democratic nations. Bhatt and Altinay looked at a different type of social entrepreneurship located in an altogether different environment. In this case, the social entrepreneurship was labeled social entrepreneurial ventures or SEVs and these were for-profit organizations located in India. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013)

In this research, it was first noted that collaboration identified opportunities, or needs. Individuals or groups come together to solve a present issue. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) This is consistent with Neumeier’s assertion that the process of social innovation is a collaborative act. (Neumeier, 2011) The identification of the opportunity or need was followed by the development of unique solutions for the need or opportunity through the leveraging of social capital. Generally, exposure to the problem, along with exposure to possible solutions results in solutions suitable to the local problem. Social innovation is further promoted through the

relationships of trust and co-operation that are both pre-existing and newly formed when social capital is drawn upon to enhance a situation. These relationships not only bind the groups in their efforts to allay difficult situations, the relationships will facilitate the operation of the networks. These social networks further promote social innovation when they are used to gain access to new sources of funding. The activities that occur as relationships are leveraged open the doors to new networks and relationships, thus revealing new opportunities for funding. And finally, the newly formed and long-lasting relationships are guarded and maintained as the innovative SEV is scaled up. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013)

Preliminary research on social entrepreneurial ventures (SEVs) in India indicates that a successful approach to funding is the leveraging of social capital, especially in emerging economies. However, these SEVs reviewed in India were operated for-profit and were initiated without any institutional support, quite a different looking animal than is evidenced in developed, western economies. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) What is in common with all these instances is the leveraging of social capital. In all cases, the success lies in “the ties that bind,” or the networks. Strong, local ties within communities identify needs and directions, along with possible solutions that work for the local community. This reiterates the need to include the local knowledge, (Reimer, 2008) or the recipients of the initiative (Maxwell, 2003) (Goldenberg, 2004) in the solution. Weak, external ties to other individuals, organizations, institutions, and communities are necessary to access resources that will propel the initiative to success. There is growing evidence to support the value of weak, external relationships, coupled with significant cross collaboration. (Goldenberg, 2004) (Florida, Cushing, & Gates, 2009) (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) (McElroy, 2002)

All these ideas pertaining to social innovation coming together will be investigated at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Have relationships or networking, communication, place-based policy, and after-school programming all come together in one place to effect change that is relevant to the rural community of Ingersoll? Have disparate entities have collaborated to produce Fusion, and in so doing, have altered practices and perceptions within the community? This will be explored through the ensuing description of Fusion.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Case Study

There is an expectation that the results of inquiries will benefit people towards further understanding of their situations. Most people, including even the most specialized in certain fields, come to understand human affairs through personal experience. Case studies are believed to be useful in the study of human affairs. (Stake, 1978) Although case studies have been used in theory building, Stake opines that that might not be its best use. Individuals looking to increase their knowledge pertaining to social issues often seek holistic and episodic information. This dovetails nicely with the knowledge provided by the case study. (Stake, 1978) “Predictive theories and universal cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete case knowledge is therefore more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals.” (Flyvbjerg, 2011) It is possible that the best use of the case study is to contribute to “existing experience and humanistic understanding.” (Stake, 1978, p. 7)

Flyvbjerg (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 303) attends to this concept when he suggests that “context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity”. It is as one becomes experienced with many cases over time that an individual can move from being a novice to an expert. (Flyvbjerg, 2011) A case study can be bounded by whatever the researcher chooses as the boundaries. This perhaps contributes to a misunderstanding of the value of the case study. It is often thought that the case study is simply of an individual; however, case study can be an individual, an organization, any collection that the researcher chooses. Case studies may contain within the research any type of data and any type of research method, simply put; case studies do not imply a methodology as they contain varied data types. (Stake, 1978) (Yin, 1981) They can be helpful in disproving an hypothesis in that a single exception to a rule can clearly be examined. (Flyvbjerg, 2011) (Stake, 1978) As all know, it only requires a single exception to an hypothesis to negate the hypothesis.

These qualities indicated by a case study method of inquiry are well suited to the investigation into the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. The case is bounded by the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, those instrumental in seeing the Centre develop into the institute it is today, and by a specific time frame. Summarizing the case is not a goal of this work, but rather, to provide experiential understanding to the reader. This case study should not provide a “truth” or suggest that there is only one way to take knowledge away from this work, but rather, allow the readers to discover their own “truth” within the study. (Flyvbjerg, 2011) This is relevant for those individuals that find within the work a possible solution to a region’s similar social challenges.

Data Collection

One key informant was identified as a starting point to the project. This individual has been present in various capacities throughout the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Accordingly, the individual drew up a list of possible interviewees that were felt to have either contributed to the development of the Centre, or were present in a capacity that would provide an invaluable perspective on the development of Fusion. As the interviews progressed, some informants offered up other individuals that they felt could also contribute to the research process. It is a testament to the veracity of the initial list of possible interviewees that most names were already listed as possible interviewees. Only one possible informant that was contacted declined to participate in the research.

Interview questions were drawn up to be quite general for the first interview with the key informant. Answers to the questions of why, what, where, when, and how informed the original general interview question selection. A review of the list of possible interviewees indicates an order of interview based on a time line of original stakeholders interviewed first, and then more recent stakeholders interviewed towards the end of the interview process. This sequence was felt to best document the development in an orderly fashion. Based on the role of the interviewee at the time of their involvement with the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre, the generalized interview questions would be revised to hone in on the particularities of the interviewees' work with the Centre. The general questions would still be asked in most cases, simply as a corroboration technique and as a method to reveal any new insights that individual may have had in the general development process. New insights could potentially require different questions for interviewees or reviews of previous informants' answers. The interview process would be wrapped up with a final interview with the key informant. This interview is to be utilized for further clarification and corroboration. Interviews were to be conducted over a period of 10 months. The interviews would all be conducted either at Fusion, or at the interviewees' place of employment. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for ease of analysis.

Document review will be done to provide background information and to inform the questions that make up the interview process. The document review process will also provide context throughout the interview process.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed rather simply, looking at the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre specifically in six areas. The data was analyzed from a social innovation framework in these six categories: partnerships/relationships, the idea of Fusion and building acquisition, programming, staffing, funding, and culture. Because social innovation literature leans heavily on social capital, or in other words, relationships and partnerships, analyzing the data in terms of partnerships and networks was obviously necessary. Understanding the relationships and networks that made Fusion a reality is a key component when talking about this

facility from the perspective of social innovation. This one category will inform all other categories as networks and relationships grounds literature in social innovation.

Understanding how the building came to be acquired and the site location was also a critical aspect simply because it is the physical presence, it houses the project. Acquiring real estate is a significant financial consideration and seems to be the obvious starting point for the development of a youth centre. How do you go about housing such a facility, and how does social innovation play into that process is a good launching point for development discussions. The origin and the persistence of the idea of a youth centre is also key, without that focus, there is no centre. These two points necessitated some investigation.

Programming was another obvious choice as after-school programming, as briefly outlined in the introduction, has been studied extensively in terms of its ability to deliver positive youth development outcomes. After-school programming was seemingly the vehicle used to effect change in the social challenges facing the local youth as Fusion is a facility dedicated to after-school programming for youth. Previous works on ASPs suggest that this type of programming can facilitate positive youth outcomes across various domains. While this work did not look at ASPs in particular, it was evident that after-school programming was deemed the best vehicle for youth intervention for positive youth development in general.

Staffing was deemed to be an obvious category as well as the staff would be instrumental in the development of the Centre. Staffing would affect the programming and the social capital which impacts social innovation. Effective staff would engage and support the youth clientele. If staff cannot engage the youth, or interact effectively, was there a possibility that the Centre would not be successful? What types of educational background was necessary to ensure the success of a youth Centre. These types of questions pertaining to what staffing looks like at a youth centre were foremost as the data was analyzed. The degree of social innovation would hinge on the staffing that populates the Centre. Staffing that is high on collaboration, networking, and forming productive partnerships might be necessary if the Centre is to successfully engage the youth and effect positive outcomes in the community.

Funding is an inevitable aspect of this work, had funding not been found, the Centre would either not exist, or perhaps look very different. How did the funding come about, how did social innovation play into acquiring funding? It would be difficult to address social innovation without looking at the role of funding.

Finally, culture is a component as the environment of Fusion might play a role in the success of the facility. A centre that is in place strictly to address youth in a community might have culture characteristics that would contribute to the “success” of the programming, and the centre itself. What types of professional conduct demonstrated by the staff that was specifically geared to

empowering youth, providing a safe environment for youth, and providing excellent role models for youth. Youth engagement, although assumed to be a vital aspect of the success of the Centre, is not analyzed in this work. It is assumed that youth engagement, youth engagement meaning that youth continue to frequent the Centre in numbers that have permitted its continued existence, is present. Understanding the environment or culture of the Centre was helpful in terms of understanding the “success” of the Centre.

All the interviews were reviewed repeatedly, pulling out of each interview any references to the six outlined categories. The changes that occurred through the development of the Centre will be illuminated, and as per Neumeier, (Neumeier, 2011) it is not the physical description of the Centre that most interests us, but rather the asset building that took place as Fusion came into being. With that in mind, attention was paid to the development of the six categories over the first decade that the Centre has been in existence. By pulling references to the categories, a description of the categories over time is built.

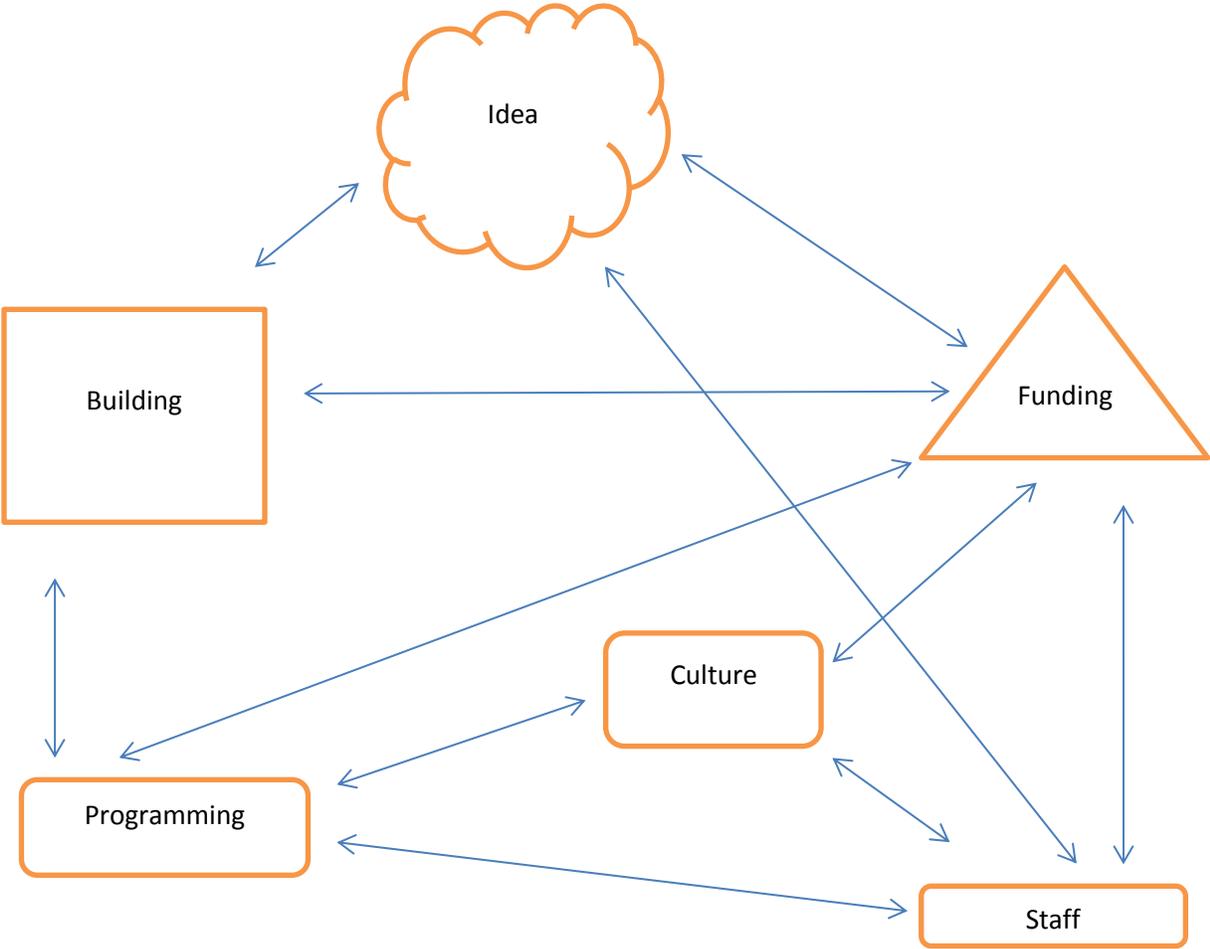
I previously defined social innovation as “changes of attitudes, behaviour, or perceptions of a group of people joined in a network of aligned interests that in relation to the group’s horizon of experiences lead to new and improved ways of collaborative action within the group and beyond.” (Neumeier, 2011, p. 55) This research looks at the six categories in light of changes in attitudes or behaviours that lead to changes in collaborative action.

All six categories are very closely intertwined and impact each other. Staffing will impact the culture that is in place, while culture impacts youth engagement, or continued youth presence in the facility. Programming is impacted by staffing and funding, and youth engagement is both impacted by and impacts programming. Funding will impact all aspects of the Centre. (See Figure 1) Social innovation is at play in all categories.

Figure 1

Relationships between the six categories

The following diagram demonstrates the various relationships that exist between the 6 categories that have been analyzed.



Chapter Four

The Description of the Development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre

The Idea and Building Acquisition

In 2003, the Town of Ingersoll took the opportunity to develop and update its Community Strategic Plan. The updated Strategic Plan was realized through a thorough investigation of the existing initiatives found in the region, clarifying the current economic situation in the area, a skills assessment for the region, and community feedback. Of the priorities identified through the strategic development process, youth was identified as one of a few top priorities. Numerous interviewees indicated that there was a generalized concern that in the Ingersoll downtown core youth were congregating and indulging in mischievous behaviour. It was revealed that the youth identified a lack of “place” and a lack of “things to do” as a consistent issue. A number of interviewees concurred with the youth perception that they did not have a “place” and that many youth did not have access to the activities that were available in the area thus leaving the youth with “nothing to do”.

The Town Council at the time, which included some newly elected, younger members, was highly motivated to support and engage youth; council members were interested in the welfare of the youth. A member of the council indicated that there was a noticeable shift from a previous preoccupation with the welfare of seniors to an interest in the well-being of the youth. Prior to the Fusion Activity and Technology Centre, youth in Ingersoll could participate in ubiquitous recreation sports such as hockey, figure skating, swimming, to name a few, as well as various after-school programs located within the school frameworks. There were also programs provided by various community organizations such as the Upper Deck program, a faith based youth drop-in centre. What is revealed in this research by a number of interviewees is that many youth could not access these programs for various reasons: lack of economic resources, lack of family or peer support, lack of transportation required to attend these activities, or youth may have felt available programs lacked relevance.

Subsequent to the completion of the Strategic Plan, in 2004 the Town Council adopted the Strategic Plan thereby requiring that the status of the Strategic Plan be revisited every year. One individual felt this step was necessary as the Strategic plan was the result of input from the community. This plan was what the community wanted to see for their community. This is a clear indication that political will was very strong; the concerns found within the Strategic Plan were to be addressed. There was no Council opposition to the development of the youth centre at the time of inception. Consequent to the political desire to embrace the Strategic Plan as a whole, various strategies were implemented in the town of Ingersoll, including the youth strategies. Currently, political will remains strong, but it is tempered by sensitivity to global

economic conditions. It has been mentioned a couple of times that the budget will be under greater scrutiny going forward as a result of general fiscal concerns.

A Youth Advisory Committee was struck; this committee was to include adult members of the community, Council members, and youth representatives. In an interesting role reversal, the youth would function as mentors for the adults. The logic behind this concept, as explained in an interview, was that adults are not youth, they don't think like youth, and they don't know what youth want. Having the youth serve as mentors to the adults on this committee helped ensure that the youth were well represented in discussions as they moved forward with the development of the youth centre. As well, there was a Youth Council that was solely populated with youth from the community and took their direction from the youth in the community. Any adults associated with maintaining this Council would also fill the more traditional role of adult mentor for youth. This Youth Council was to be the "voice" of the youth and be able to bring forward concerns, goals, needs, gaps, etc. to the Town Council and to direct the development of Fusion. Initially, the Youth Council membership was populated by those youth described as "the leaders" of the community. By "leaders" it was meant that these youth were involved in various activities in the community already, were probably doing well if not excelling in the educational system, and generally speaking hailed from stable family homes. Over time, the Youth Council took on members that might be described as "at-risk" youth, youth that did not participate in other activities, and might not come from stable family homes. It was the goal that this Youth Council count in its membership representatives of all youth demographics as one of the goals of the new youth Centre was that it be available to and representative of all youth in the community.

The building itself was acquired when the Sacred Heart Catholic school was closed down. The town was given first right of refusal on the sale and decided to purchase the school, intending this to be the location for the youth centre. The school is ideally located in downtown Ingersoll, across from the McDonald's restaurant, significant in that this was a downtown location frequented by idle youth. It is also central to the high school and some public schools. The fact that it is central to many of the schools is a key point in terms of accessibility. Youth attending the area schools are able to walk to the building, are therefore not dependent on others for access to the Centre. Even those youth residing in the outskirts of Ingersoll can access the Centre as these youth are bussed into school. Therefore, those youth living in the outskirts of the town would only be reliant on a ride home after having participated in the various programming available at Fusion.

There were no inspections done on the school prior to the purchase. Consequently, there were significant unanticipated costs associated with bringing the school up to code. Extensive renovations were required prior to opening the doors. Because the Centre was to house a technology component, significant electrical and mechanical upgrades were necessary and the installation of air conditioning was required as schools rarely have air conditioning. The entire

facility needed fresh paint. In general, it was a massive renovation project, just in terms of bringing the building to code, and then ensuring that the space was set up to accommodate the tenants and youth programming. The manager was hired before the doors opened, and while renovations were still under way. Hiring the manager prior to opening ensured the youth had a say in the colours and various other aspects of the renovations to the space that would house youth programming. Initially, all the manager had was a child's desk and an old wooden teacher's chair pulled up to the little desk, along with no functional washrooms.

Town Council members and senior management for the Town of Ingersoll knew that it would not be sufficient to simply be a recreation centre, it would operate more as a community hub with community organizations helping fund the centre through their use of the Centre. Tenants would be recruited that would serve the community as a whole. An interviewee noted that as a community hub, services are readily available and as accessible as the Centre itself. As previously mentioned, there were a number of recreational type venues in town, but in keeping with the Strategic Plan and the passion for a youth centric facility, it would necessarily have to be more. Of course, recreation would be a part of the programming, but this recreational programming would have to be accessible to all youth, as the existing recreational activities in the town were frequently not affordable for a portion of the youth demographic. And as one interviewee noted, mixing the demographics provided perspective for all the youth. Some youth would have the opportunity to understand what a "better" path might look like, while those youth fortunate enough to be on a "better" path would understand how fortunate they were in their life. Furthermore, in order to access various funding for the development, this facility would have to provide a greater variety of programming. A couple of interviewees indicated that funding would be difficult to obtain for more sports-only oriented centres. One individual was passionate about the Centre providing programming that nourished the mind as well as the body. Sometimes recreation is not just about physical activity, but what the youth prefer to do with their leisure time. Even better, per a number of interviewees, recreation can be about learning and feeling connected to the community while being involved in recreational programming. Discussions between various community members, business and union representatives, and youth, many of whom had been involved in the original input for the Strategic Plan, directed the resulting programs made available at the Centre.

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre opened its doors in 2005, its hours of operation were from 2:30 – 10:00 pm Monday to Saturday, and the Centre is closed on Sundays; those hours of operation continue today. The building itself is open at 8:00 am to accommodate its tenants utilizing the space during the day. Please see Partnerships/Networking for the development of tenants as a part of the push to develop a revenue stream and provide community services to area residents.

Staffing

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre falls under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Department of the Town of Ingersoll. As such, the Director for the Parks and Recreation department was responsible for the renovations and is responsible for the oversight of the Centre. The Centre's budget is under the jurisdiction of the Director and is part of the Parks and Recreation budget.

Initially, the Centre was staffed by Craigwood Youth Services on the technology side, running the program then known as the Youth Technology Learning Centre and by the Parks and Recreation on the recreation/social side. This was one of the first partnerships between Fusion and other entities, and at the time was felt to be a good match as Craigwood, whose business is youth services programming, could provide its own staff trained in managing youth and its own staff with the technological expertise for the technology programs. The original staff on the recreation side under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Department consisted of a manager and some full-time and part-time staff. Prior to becoming fully staffed with professionally trained youth workers, the Centre did have Educational Assistants (EAs) from the school system working alongside the few youth trained staff members. Sometime around the year 2006, give or take a few months, Fusion moved to full-time professionally trained youth workers when it became evident that the staff would need to start work before school let out, this precluded the continued employment of the EA's. The Educational Assistants would not be able to leave their role as EAs until school dismissed, therefore, they were unavailable to start work at Fusion before school let out. A core group of full time professional youth workers are complemented by part-time professionally trained youth workers and some volunteers for specific programming. The remaining staff is characterized by administrative and maintenance duties. The hired staff are all employees of the Town of Ingersoll.

There is a full-time Manager that is responsible for the Fusion Activity and Technology Centre and this person reports directly to the Director of Parks and Recreation. Initially, an experienced youth worker with an ability to develop innovative programming, with strong organizational skills along with an understanding of staffing and funding requirements, and with a sense of the possible outcomes as a result of the inputs, was sought and hired for the role. As noted by an interviewee, it was also paramount that this individual builds partnerships throughout the community and within the Centre. It was necessary that the manager be able to bridge the gap between a somewhat conservative community and the more flamboyant nature of the youth demographic. This position was filled 6 or 8 months prior to the opening of the Centre, and that individual spent a great deal of time with the youth, learning what it was that the youth most wanted available to them in the Centre when it opened its doors. According to an interviewee, during that initial period, even before formally opening the doors to the Centre, time was spent with the youth by holding events such as pizza parties, determining what they wanted to see in the Centre. Approximately 20 – 50 youth participated in those get togethers as youth identified

what they would like to see at the Centre. Today, the Manager position continues to require an innovator with an ability to acquire funding while understanding and responding to the changing needs of the Centre, along with managing a larger, more sophisticated Centre than what was in place when the doors first opened.

There is a full time administrative assistant, this individual is vital to the cohesion of the Centre. Accounts payable and receivable, payroll, scheduling and booking, and all the day-to-day processes that keep the Centre functioning fall under the purview of the Administrative Assistant. There is also a full-time employee responsible for maintenance and cleaning.

The employees found on the floor working directly with the youth are graduates in Recreation and Leisure, Child and Youth Worker, or may have a Corrections background. Graduating from programs such as these ones will provide employees that are trained in a variety of skills, such as youth programming development and management, or understanding and managing youth behaviours. The individuals in charge of the specialized programming such as the Art or Computer Programs do not have youth work backgrounds; they are graduates in the specific field of programming. Professional development is ongoing at the Centre. These staff members are contract, full-time and they develop, implement, and oversee programs. Generally speaking, program development is done in-house. As noted previously, youth provide the input as to programming they would like to see, and if viable, the staff will develop appropriate programs. There are volunteers that will occasionally be used to augment specific programming, for instance, volunteers may help in the recreation portion of the programming. All volunteers undergo the standard background checks for safety.

Within the group of contract, full-time staff can be found individuals that will act in a quasi-management capacity when taking on the role of Shift Leader or Shift Supervisor. As a Shift Leader/Supervisor, this individual is responsible for scheduling or rotating all the staff on duty through the different program areas. For instance, an individual would be found in the Art program room for one hour, then rotate out to perhaps the Gymnasium for one hour, to oversee the programming there and then rotate out perhaps to the skate park, for an hour of supervising that programming. Scheduling/rotating the staff in this manner serves two purposes, it ensures that staff did/do not congregate in one area, therefore leaving another area unsupervised, it provides accountability by guaranteeing that if one employee is responsible for running a program, then the schedule places that individual in the appropriate spot for the appropriate time frame while ensuring that all the other areas are covered. Scheduling staff ensured that an incident in an area would always have a staff member that could respond as every programming area was covered, and it provided a known individual with which management could then follow-up depending on the type of situation. Rotating the staff regularly keeps staff fresh as some areas in the Centre are more demanding to supervise than others. It can be more onerous to supervise in the lounge than the computer centre as youth in the lounge are not focussed on any

one thing, and are therefore in a better position to come into conflict or indulge in mischievous behaviour. Youth utilizing the computers are generally singularly focussed on the computers and are not as likely to come into conflict or indulge in unwanted behaviours that result from idleness. The Shift Leader also provided back-up should any employees require support in managing a situation with youth. Perhaps there was a conflict between a few youth, and a staff member might need some assistance in de-escalation, the Shift Leader would be called in to aid in that process. If there is a more specialized program implemented by an individual without a youth worker background, the Shift Leader/Supervisor can provide the support needed as necessary.

The front-line staff is young, generally recent graduates of the above mentioned educational programs. The benefit of cycling recent graduates into these positions not only keeps the staff current and relevant to the youth client, it ensures up-to-date training in terms of managing youth. As a result of this particular aspect of these positions, as noted by a few interviewees, these jobs are a stepping stone to a career, and not to be considered careers in and of themselves. It was noted by an individual that it is not necessarily a physical age that is important, but rather a young attitude. Occasionally there were/are individuals that are significantly older than the youth client but these individuals are invested in the youth, consequently can relate to the youth in a productive manner. Positions at the Centre also require that staff be able to manage/control and in some cases restrain youth. It is the case that there are occasionally youth issues that result in negative behaviours, these behaviours must be managed effectively to maintain the safe environment of the Centre. Most roles involving technical expertise, such as the graphic arts program, the ReBuildIt program, art programs, and radio broadcasting are all paid positions. As with all organizations, job descriptions change and evolve, and Fusion is no different. These technical roles have also changed over time as individuals have come and gone. Today, the roles may have once again evolved and may not look precisely like those outlined in the work.

Regular staff meetings are a routine at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. These meetings cover all business related to the Centre and keeps the staff and management up-to-date on issues. These meetings generally occur before the Centre opens its doors to the youth. The necessity of having the meetings at this time ruled out any further employment opportunities for EAs at Fusion. The meetings were/are a business requirement that may reveal new opportunities for the Centre, new youth concerns and initiatives, will facilitate management responses to needs and concerns of youth and staff, may identify new directions, enhance or promote skill development, allows a review of evident youth behaviours and possible ramifications, and any other business related to the ongoing success of the Centre, staff, and youth.

Partnerships/Relationships/Networking

There are and have been a number of relationships formed over the decade that the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre has been operational. Some relationships have persisted over time while others lapsed as they were no longer relevant to the Centre. This research does not attempt to identify all the partnerships/relationships that have contributed to the development of the Centre but instead utilizes some partnerships/relationships to highlight salient aspects of the development.

Initially, the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre was organized into the two somewhat discrete entities. There was the Youth Activity area that was managed and staffed by the Town of Ingersoll Parks and Recreation Department and there was the Technology Centre that was managed and staffed by Craigwood Youth Services. This partnership seemed auspicious as Craigwood was a youth services company with a staff well equipped to manage a technology centre. The Parks and Recreation department was obviously well equipped to manage a recreation program as that is precisely what they do. After about a year, Craigwood Youth Services relinquished control of the Technology Centre to the Town of Ingersoll Parks and Recreation Department. Although the partnership between Craigwood Youth Services and the Town of Ingersoll seemed a good match initially, the differing mandates held by the two management groups limited the ability for either entity to fulfill their mandates.

A few interviewees confirmed the initial partnership between Craigwood Youth Services and the Town of Ingersoll started well. However, a tension evolved between the two as a result of differing funding models which naturally resulted in different operational requirements. The Town of Ingersoll funded the Activity Centre, and to a certain extent, had less restriction on its functionality and its mandate as a result of more liberal access to financial resources. This perception of ready access to funding seemed related to the perception that you can always go back to the taxpayer if you need more money, per a comment from one interviewee. This was simply an observation made by an interviewee and there seemed to be a general perception that because it was taxpayer money, there was/is an endless supply of money. The veracity of the perception is not analyzed in this work, nor was it echoed across the board with all interviewees. Craigwood Youth Services, a not-for-profit entirely dependent on government funding, seemingly had more pressure to remain within its budget. Because Craigwood Youth Services apparently had limited access to financial resources, it had planned to generate revenue through the Technology Centre through for-hire training programs available to paying customers. This plan effectively eliminated access to the Technology Centre during business hours. The Town of Ingersoll had planned to allow youth access to the Technology Centre for youth programming from the time the Centre opened after school until closing time. These were mutually exclusive requirements of the Technology Centre, ultimately something had to give. As previously stated, the Town of Ingersoll eventually took control of the Technology Centre and the entire Fusion

Youth Activity and Technology Centre was under the management of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Another partnership was formed with the VON locating their programming within the Centre in the very beginning, and is still there today. The VON renovated their space as needed for the programming that they would provide for their clients. The VON clients are not the youth of the community, but rather, the seniors of the community. They open the doors for their programming early in the morning, and generally, can be found to be wrapping up their programming mid-afternoon, just as the youth begin to show up for the youth programming. Obviously, this is a good partnership in that the hours of operation do not overlap. Furthermore, this partnership fulfills a community service that is located centrally to the community and is highly accessible.

According to a couple of informants, the partnership between the VON and Fusion had its ups and downs as well. The biggest hurdle was the use of the kitchen. The VON had renovated a kitchen space that was required for their programming. The partnership agreement allowed for some youth programming that would involve use of the kitchen space. This did not work well for long as eventually a tension developed relating to the condition of the space following the youth programming. Generally speaking, the space was not left in the condition required for the day programming offered by the VON, and ultimately, the kitchen space was no longer available for youth programming.

According to one interviewee, what proved to be a positive aspect of the partnership, aside from revenue generation for the Town of Ingersoll, was the mingling of seniors and youth, if only for a short portion of the day when they programming overlapped. Evidently, according to an interviewee, for some youth, the presence of seniors was a new experience, for others, a reminder of grandparent figures. It offered new perspectives for both the youth and seniors, removed some stigmas that are associated with both demographics, and pushed the scope of behaviour expectations for the youth. There was some dissension in terms of the youth/senior interaction as other interviewees claim that it did not occur.

A few interviewees confirm that the OPP were and continue to be proponents of the Centre. The regular presence of the police authority builds relationships between the policing body and the youth, allowing a respect for authority to develop in youth that otherwise might have felt a mistrust of police authority. Although rare, police are called upon if necessary should a situation require more intervention than the Centre staff can provide. Interviewees did comment that Police support also facilitated ongoing political support from the Town Council which translates to ongoing funding, presumably the police are well situated to credibly suggest the positive impact the Centre has on the youth in the community.

The Thames Valley School Board eventually took space in the Centre to provide support to the Alternative Education program it offered. Originally, the alternative education process was offered through a partnership with Fanshawe College according to an interviewee. Because it was revealed to the staff over the course of time that some youth that frequent the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre participate in the Alternative Education Centre; it seemed to be a natural fit. Youth that participate in the Alternative Education Program are there for a reason, they did not thrive in the traditional educational setting. The management at the Centre work to maintain relationships with the local schools to facilitate youth experience within the Centre and at school. Management strives to maintain an open dialogue with the schools at all times.

The public health nurse was eventually brought in for about one and a half years. Providing access to public health was thought to be a benefit. One interviewee noted that there were issues within the youth demographic that could be addressed by access to public health. This work does not investigate the type of youth challenges that were/are present in the lives of the youth today, but accepts that the presence of the public health nurse was thought to contribute to positive outcomes for youth development. This development was not without controversy, as noted by a number of interviewees. As the public health nurse would be available for sexual health discussions, some members of the community were opposed to any sexual health dialogues. Contributing to the opposition was the proximity of the Centre to the neighbouring Catholic Church. As noted previously, the building once housed a Catholic school and is often the case with the Catholic schools; it is next door to the Catholic Church. Eventually, the public health nurse no longer maintained a presence within the Centre. An interviewee also noted while there was some anonymity available to the youth that accessed these services, they could not provide enough client anonymity and that lack also contributed to the discontinuation of the public health nurse. As well, the public health office required the presence of a private washroom facility, a condition Fusion could not meet, and ultimately, these various obstacles resulted in the discontinuation of the office of public health within Fusion. The Centre did continue to provide condoms to the youth, however, that practice was discontinued not long after the public health nurse was no longer available at the Centre. It was felt that the staff was not really trained to be handing out condoms.

There is a community mental health presence in the facility. The mental health office maintains business hours, but because there is a partnership between Fusion and the mental health community, should youth require mental health support after business hours, there is access to mental health staff such that youth can receive services quickly. Although Fusion is not in the business of providing health services, the presence of these services is beneficial to the youth client. One interviewee discussed the value of having ready access to the services there should the youth require some support. Another interviewee discussed the value of access to services such as public health or mental health support in a facility where the youth would go as a general rule. It is possible that youth would not access the services if doing so could involve being seen,

in other words, there is a measure of anonymity available to the youth if they access the services within the Centre itself, and not in a more public venue. Furthermore, professional development training enables Fusion staff to recognize mental health issues and point youth in a direction for help, while not be able to specifically counsel the youth, they can guide them to an organization that can provide help.

Ingersoll Support Services Incorporated (ISSI) is a partner located in the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. It is an organization akin to community living organizations, providing support services for youth and adults that face mental or physical barriers. A TVO project highlighting youth within communities that were displaying empathy was the catalyst for this development. Through the TVO project, youth investigated community needs and a requirement for a therapy room known as a Snoozelin room was revealed. This relationship between Fusion youth, TVO, and ISSI resulted in the development of the Snoozelin room, a therapy room that is managed by ISSI. The Snoozelin room is utilized whenever sensory stimulation is indicated, for example, therapies focused on autism, Alzheimer disease, or dementia, to name a few. Youth, TVO, and Fusion collaborated to identify a need for this therapy, acquire funding, and build the room. The room is used daily, frequently multiple times during the day.

An aspect of partnerships concerns the relationships forged with the community at large. Various interviewees commented on the fact that The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre works at maintaining relationships with the parents in the community in a variety of manners and works to partner with various organizations within the community. Every effort is made to make all parents aware of what is available in the Centre, and to address any concerns parents may have as to youth behaviours that might be present, and whether or not there is adequate supervision to forestall any negative behaviours. Parents are encouraged to bring forward any concerns, and suggestions are made to parents as to how the youth can participate in the Centre. For example, it is possible that parents may not like the idea of having their children just “hanging out” at the Centre so, as one individual indicated, suggestions are made by the staff as to specific programs in which the youth can participate. In this manner, there is a specific start and end time, the youth are not simply “hanging out.” This process can increase the comfort level of the parent.

And generally, the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre management and staff work with as many community organizations as possible. They promote the Centre as a venue for Community group meetings, as well as organization sign-up processes. For instance, sport groups such as hockey, baseball, or soccer, to name only a few, could hold their sign-up drives at Fusion. Fusion is a presence at many community events, with youth doing volunteer work such as cleaning up garbage at the Canterbury Folk Festival. Youth from Fusion will provide free video services to the community through the audio/visual programming available through the Centre. The youth volunteer for other organizations such as Ribfest and the Santa Clause parade,

representing Fusion to the community. An interviewee noted that the youth are also involved with community events such as the Labour Day celebration and the Car and Motorcycle Shine, put on by the local union at the automotive plant. The Haunted House put on during Halloween is a highly anticipated community event.

Whenever there is a location where youth tend to congregate, parents and community members may perceive the situation negatively. It was revealed that this has occurred at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. The fact that there are “at risk” youth present at the Centre may compound the sense of trepidation felt by parents and the community. As observed above, Fusion works hard at reaching out to the community to build relationships and bring parents and community members into the Centre where appropriate. In the beginning the Centre held meetings to address concerns held by the community, and a couple of interviewees spoke of some opponents of the Centre becoming stalwart supporters of the Centre following community meetings and access to the Centre to observe precisely what the Centre was attempting to accomplish. Although adults are not encouraged to be present while youth programming is under way, parents and community members are encouraged to utilize the Centre during off hours, thereby developing an appreciation of what the Centre provides not only to the youth but to the community at large. Some examples of parent or community members utilizing the space include exercise programs, organization meetings, and business skill training, all organized by independent community bodies.

A strong relationship exists between the CAW Local 88 and the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. The CAW was instrumental in acquiring extra funding for the development of Fusion. Money was raised to aid with both capital development and programming development. Today, the CAW continues to fund the Centre annually, as well as occasional one time only contributions. The CAW also ran workplace safety programs for the youth in conjunction with the Youth Technology Learning Centre. As well, the United Way and the Royal Bank of Canada have formed a relationship with the Centre in terms of providing extra funding. Please see the section under funding for more specifics.

A few interviewees commented on the various Community Clubs such as the Kiwanis and Lion’s Club that have partnered with Fusion over the years. Mutually beneficial business community relationships have been cultivated to strengthen the presence and value of the Centre and to support the business community through youth engagement in local business. In the beginning, the Rotary Club and the business community at large were connected through the Youth Technology Learning Centre in an effort to address a skills gap issue. For instance, the Rotary Club, in conjunction with the Youth Technology Learning Centre ran Junior Achievement programs. The JA programs teach youth business skills, most notably, how to start your own business but as with many programs and partnerships that waxed and waned over time, it is not

running today. There is currently a different program in place, known as SureStart, to address entrepreneurial and employability skills.

Today, Fusion works to bring business owners and operators into the Centre. One interviewee claims they highlight the programming that is available to youth, and showcase the talents of the youth to raise awareness of the Centre as a resource for the community. Through this type of networking and through the business support programming available at the Centre, the business community is made aware of the existing labour pool and the youth are made aware of employment requirements and standards, become aware of opportunities, and learn how to develop businesses and/or become valuable employees. While this is not a mandate of the Parks and Recreation Department, it was an aspect of the original partnership between Craigwood and Fusion and this programming direction persists today. Programs such as Workplace Safety and the SureStart program continue to be offered at Fusion in conjunction with partnerships with the local union and CES for instance, which address a skills gap in the local youth demographic. The SureStart program, in partnership with Community Employment Services, is a program that teaches employment skills to the youth. This particular program reaches an older demographic, youth aged 14 – 29.

Smoke Free Ontario was a presence in the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. They paid for youth to go out into the community and promote the cessation of smoking. They also donated some funds towards the renovation of the sports field. While this seemed to be a brief relationship, an interviewee commented on the fact that the youth involved in Smoke Free Ontario mixing with the youth at the Centre was evidence of barriers breaking down as the two groups were not found to interact as a general rule.

While some relationships may eventually fail, Fusion works hard at maintaining the relationships that are forged. It is a necessary condition of success in a small town, especially as it is very easy to step on toes. Occasionally, as Fusion expanded to meet the needs of youth, it offered programming that overlapped with programming that is/was offered by other organizations. It is in the best interest of the organizations, the youth, and ultimately the community if the two or more bodies can work together to provide what is probably enhanced programming when resources are pooled. One interviewee points to the example of the collaboration between Community Employment Services (CES) and Fusion. Fusion's programming that is geared towards entrepreneurship and employment skill development infringes somewhat on CES programming. The two organizations have collaborated in order to provide enhanced programming that attempts to efficiently utilize resources from both organizations and not duplicate programming.

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre has strong staff/youth relationships. The strength of the relationships between the two is built on a professional staff that can manage

youth needs while maintaining a passion for youth. Because the staff tends to be young, they can build relationships that verge on a mentorship type relationship while still being relevant to the youth. The staff can have conversations with youth, conversations that might be difficult for any number of reasons, for that youth to have with their family. An interviewee commented that these mentoring type relationships provide another stable, caring individual that can expose the youth to future possibilities. A couple of interviewees commented on the observed benefits from strong youth/staff relationships.

Most interviewees were asked what success looks like to them. Not surprisingly, many indicated that the success of Fusion in large part is due to the positive relationships forged between staff and youth. Youth frequenting the Centre may have significant issues that require a professional understanding as to how to properly support those individuals. Providing a staff that can respond appropriately to issues, build up the youth, engage youth, and help the youth to grow into productive members of society is key.

Programming

This research does not seek to list all the programming that has been or is available to the Centre over the past decade. As with the partnership discussion, the programming discussion will highlight some programs that help define the development of the Centre.

The Centre initially targeted youth aged 14 – 18 and now are including the 12/13 year old in the target market. The programming at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre was and is youth driven. The youth determine what is relevant and of interest, bring the proposal to Management, and from there, discussions are undertaken as to the feasibility of the new program. There was/is a Youth Advisory Council populated by youth and adults from the community along with a Youth Council populated by youth only from the community. These bodies represent youth membership to the Municipality and to the Management and are the voice of the youth in the community. There is as well, a Business Advisory Council that is populated by both youth representatives and members of the Community. This body gives guidance and direction to the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Rounding out the body of programming is the special needs programs. Youth with special needs are welcomed in the facility until the age of 21 as that is the age at which they would graduate from high school. There does not seem to be programs and services geared specifically to individuals with special needs, however, special needs youth are encouraged to attend where possible and the Centre is highly accessible.

When the doors first opened, Fusion functioned as two different entities. The Technology Centre, known as YTLC or Youth Technology Learning Centre, was operated by Craigwood Youth Services and offered technology related programs while the Activity Centre was operated by the Town of Ingersoll and offered more social programs. The YTLC in conjunction with the

CAW offered workplace safety courses as part of their technology training. The youth would be working with tools when occupied in the computer repair centre. Workplace safety programs continue today. The YTLC also brought in the Rotary Club to run Junior Achievement courses. These programs teach youth business skills, most notably, how to start a business. Through these programs, the YTLC was actively engaged in addressing the skills gaps that can be found in small rural towns. Business education programs have persisted over time, however, today there is a business program offered that is partnered with Community Employment Services (CES). This is the SureStart program and it provides some career and entrepreneurial training; the target age is extended to 29 years of age. Funding was obtained to run this program that targets youth interested in starting a business and it has been running for a number of years now. Technology programming continues to be a large part of the programming at Fusion as technology plays such a significant role in the lives of the youth today. Inherent to technology programming is the need to maintain current technology as technology evolves so rapidly. This can present additional funding challenges as there is a need to continually update equipment in order to stay relevant.

Initially, the Centre offered a drop-in type of programming, held movie nights, local dances, music nights showcasing youth talent, and some pick-up recreation. Homework help, tutoring, or just being available for homework support was also an initial program. To be frank, according to one interviewee, initially, a warm body that was available to listen and support the youth was a significant part of the programming initiative. As an individual noted in the interview process, culinary skill development was offered when it became apparent some youth were not going home for dinner, for any number of reasons. Fusion implemented a cooking program that taught basic cooking skills, proper hygiene, and table etiquette. At one time, a local skate park was located elsewhere in Ingersoll. A number of interviewees commented on the dilapidated nature of the park and the fact that the park was not readily visible to those passing by, nor was it well lit. These were conditions that facilitate an unhealthy environment conducive to poor behavioural choices and a possible safety hazard. The youth approached Fusion with a request to relocate the park at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. Today the skate park is located at the facility, is monitored, is well lit and is subject to the same code of conduct that applies to the whole Centre. It was quite evident through the interview process that the youth indeed drive programming, whether it is through a specific request for a program or whether staff observes a need through observations of youth behaviour.

Fusion offers general art and music programs. The types or focus of the music lessons available in the music program will vary according to the individual that is providing the music programming. One interviewee suggested that the Centre is looking at some new music programming that will incorporate an even younger demographic, youth aged 8 – 10. The art lessons are of a similar nature. The type of art programming available is dependent on the

focus of the individual providing the programming. Because there is a gymnasium available in the Centre, there is scheduled physical activity available at Fusion.

There were four social enterprises, enterprises utilizing business strategies to further a social good in the case of Fusion, offered at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre: a digital and audio recording studio, food and catering, multimedia production, and computer services. At this point, Fusion is no longer in the food and catering social enterprise, it was difficult to adhere to health and safety regulations as the kitchen was small and did not meet professional standards. The youth indicated that they had an interest digital and audio recording and a professional standard digital recording studio was put in with grant money obtained from Trillium early on in the development phase. As a result of the studio, the youth can become proficient in various recording activities. It was revealed during the research that the studio is not utilized much during the day, when the youth are at school. There is to be a push to make the community aware of the presence of the studio and it is a possibility that revenue could be generated through the rental of the space during the day. The youth have also developed an in-house audio service that broadcasts current events associated with Fusion. The ReBuildIt program, the name of the computer services component found at Fusion, is an authorized Microsoft computer refurbisher. As a computer repair program, Fusion can provide some computer repair and training services to the community. Importantly, this program teaches youth to rebuild computers and the youth are permitted to take home one computer that they have refurbished. Fusion is also an authorized by the Ontario Electronic Stewardship Program as an e-waste program as well. All the electronic waste in the county is brought to Fusion for proper disposal. The multimedia production program teaches the youth skills involved in videography, photography, and graphic design. The graphic design program has sent the youth into the business community to solicit graphic design projects. The youth will then learn to produce professional quality graphic design items for businesses through this program. This program attempts to not only teach graphic design, but some business strategies such as business solicitation and providing business services. (Please see Table 2 located in Appendix I for a list and description of the Social Enterprises)

Currently, the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre is renovating the kitchen and will be incorporating a professional kitchen. It is the hope that this will be a social enterprise that will generate revenue while teaching the youth a skill. One interviewee mused on the thought that perhaps through the development of a food product that can be taken to market, the youth will learn a new skill set while generating revenue. The youth will learn how to prepare a professional food product and all the skills associated with food preparation, business skills such as bringing a product to market, pricing, supply, marketing, and other associated business requirements of the process, along with a multitude of interpersonal skills associated with successful product development. (Please see Table 1 located in Appendix I for a complete breakdown of current programming at the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre.)

Funding

This research will not identify all funding sources, nor will it represent the most valuable funding source. This is simply a description of the development, and as such, some funders, but not all, will be identified and discussed to a certain degree. The human memory is fallible and it is possible that some funders have not been identified, and that some funding amounts and/or sources were incorrectly recalled. The following funding description attempts to best represent the correct funding as corroborated by the interviewees.

The school itself was purchased by the Corporation, the Town of Ingersoll, through town funds. The extensive renovations required bringing the school to code and to equip the school for the programming that was to be offered was done through a combination of grant money and significant community donations. At the beginning, the municipality covered approximately 85% to 90% of the required funding. There was an initial grant accessed through the Rural Economic Development (RED) program through OMAFRA. Craigwood accessed the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities for funding in the early days, before the Department of Parks and Recreation assumed control of the whole Centre. As well, Craigwood identified the use of the gaming terminals by individuals other than Fusion members, during off hours, as a possible revenue stream. This revenue stream was never realized.

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre was fortuitous in that there were individuals that were directly able to access grants or were highly networked with individuals that could provide that service. That ability to access grants and funding continues today, and is vital to the ongoing success of Fusion. It was noted that success breeds success, Fusion is a high profile Centre and its success facilitates access to monies for continued services and development. It has been intimated that some funding was received because the Centre was innovative and successful, and therefore funding was found from sources that normally would not have funded a program, but because Fusion was so much more than a simple recreation centre, it received that funding that might not normally have been given.

Today, the Town of Ingersoll funds the Centre operations and the Centre relies heavily on grants to fill in any financial voids as programming changes and evolves. A couple of interviewees noted that sometimes it seems chasing dollars takes the focus away from what the Centre is trying to accomplish in terms of empowering youth. As it would appear that grant money is necessary to fill in financial gaps at Fusion, it would be logical that seeking funding for those gaps is time consuming and distracting. It is estimated that today the Municipality covers approximately 46% of the funding. Because the Town funds the operations, it is responsible for salaries. The salaries paid as a municipal employee are superior to those salaries generally found in the Not-for-Profit industry. There is available for discussion here the idea that a higher wage will draw a more qualified employee. This was not investigated in the research.

The CAW invested heavily in the opening of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. The union raised significant amounts of initial monies that were to be matched by grant money from the Rural Economic Development (RED) program. The CAW also provided an annual infusion that has been increased over time. It has also injected one-time cash contributions into the Centre

The Trillium Foundation funded the professional grade recording studio. They also funded the SureStart program.

The United Way and the Royal Bank of Canada funds the Centre on an annual basis.

Various community organizations, such as the Rotary Club, Harvest Run, and others, have contributed over time to fund different programs and to help make capital purchases to support the various programs.

The ReBuildIt program generates some revenue through the computer refurbishment program. However, the larger revenue generator is the E-Waste component. Electronic waste, county wide, is brought to the centre for proper disposal.

When the Centre first opened, the youth paid a \$5.00 lifetime membership fee. The youth now pay a \$5.00 annual membership fee, they are given a card that they swipe upon entering the facility. Should any youth not have the \$5.00 required for membership, there is a fund to cover this situation. This really generates very little revenue and is more of a tracking tool. This allows management to monitor who is in the Centre and when they are in the Centre. It also provides contact information for the youth in the case of an emergency, more of a safety component actually. The youth pay for consumables in the kitchen, and they pay for any extracurricular activities like planned trips to other venues. In many instances, the youth will fundraise to pay for the trips to other venues as many youth cannot afford extra fees for programming.

Ultimately, the funding from the municipality provides some stability in terms of sustainability. It is also beneficial to have individuals that are proficient in accessing external funding programs to augment the municipal funds.

Culture

Professional conduct by the staff at all times is critical to an environment of safety and well-being for the youth. Some interviewees indicated that some youth frequent the centre in an effort to escape unhappy home situations. An interviewee indicated that it is a necessary function of the Centre that staff discord be absent from any interaction with the youth. The staff represents what is possible for the youth. If the youth come to the Centre only to see more dysfunction and

discord, it is possible that they would not see the point of attending at all. One interviewee mentioned that respect for all permeated the culture at Fusion.

All staff members seem to be firmly resolved in maintaining the mandate of the Centre. In this case, there is a dedication to maintaining a Centre that is accessible to all youth, and providing a “place” where all youth feel valued and feel that they are significant, contributing members of the community. There were instances where adult stakeholders were left to wait while youth issues were addressed. It could probably be said some of these incidents might not be described as a “crisis” situation but, in the eyes of the particular youth in that moment, it was a “crisis” and to be placed above an adult stakeholder would be a very powerful moment for that youth.

Boundaries and behaviours are significant aspects of any programming made available by the Centre. Clear expectations for youth are necessary. I was told that some youth frequented the Centre precisely because there were clear boundaries. Another individual commented that the youth identified boundaries as necessary when they discussed what the Centre would look like as it developed. These youth did not necessarily like the boundaries, but they seemed to understand that boundaries were necessary, whether they liked it or not. An interviewee discussed that the presence of meaningful and relevant boundaries suggest an attitude of caring, an attitude that was possibly absent in some youth’s homes. These boundaries are effective because they are reinforced with appropriate consequences for any breach of boundaries. Although this may seem counterintuitive, boundaries reinforce the power of choice, and free the youth from having to take responsibility for choices while they build up their sense of strength and wellness. An example offered, if choosing to be substance free is a pre-requisite of attending a function on a particular evening, the youth can bypass the use of substances and does not have to take complete responsibility for that choice. Is it possible that issues of peer pressure are removed because youth will understand that it is about attending the function at the Centre? There was some discussion about this brief pause in peer pressure being enough to change a trajectory and suddenly that youth is developing leadership skills and fulfilling potential because there were expectations and support available to them in that respite from peer pressure. It should be noted that the use of substances is strictly prohibited at the Centre and youth that show signs of being under the influence are asked to leave the premises. The Centre will call the youth’s home and the police if substance use is detected. The setting of boundaries and enforcing the boundaries is an integral aspect of the safe and caring community to be found at Fusion. Understanding that boundaries are an element of safety is important, and therefore, clear consequences of unwanted behaviours are necessary to maintain that attitude of care. As an interviewee commented, one of the worst things for the kids was if they were banned from the Centre for a period of time for an infraction.

Because the Centre shares space with the VON and seniors are present in the building at the same time as the youth, albeit briefly, the youth are expected to conduct themselves with respect.

Youth were expected to hold doors, mind their language, be sensitive to mobility issues demonstrated by the seniors; generally engage and be responsive to the needs of seniors.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Summary

As evidenced by the literature review, relationships/partnerships lie at the heart of social innovation. It is the leveraging of relationships that allow the access of resources (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013). There is a relationship between network connectivity and the calibre of innovative ideas generated. (Bjork & Magnusson, 2009) Strong networks are known to contribute to innovation, but surprisingly, weak ties contribute to innovation as well. (Florida, Cushing, & Gates, 2009) Given that relationships or networks are key to innovative processes, the relationships and partnerships evidenced in the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre are central to the evolution of the Centre.

Relationships/Partnerships/Networking

The few individuals that were initially involved in launching the concept of Fusion were strongly connected. Interviewees noted that the initial staff was known to a few of the people involved in the preliminary stages of development. Initial staff was local, or well-known through prior professional relationships, to those who were working to get the Centre off the ground. These strong internal relationships were able to move the Centre in a direction that was thought to best suit the local demographic. This harkens back to Goldenberg's (2004) work on social innovation and tacit knowledge combined with grassroots efforts to address local concerns. Because the individuals initially involved were very familiar with the local resources and the community at large and strongly connected, they were able to mobilize resources.

Networking between those individuals involved in the deployment of the facility continues to be a focus. Those individuals involved in the oversight of the Centre have maintained the strong working relationships between Council and management at Fusion. Former employees continue to network with Fusion even as they have moved on to other positions in other communities. These relationships that are nurtured are conducive to continued innovative processes both at Fusion and in other locales.

Networking throughout the community continues to be focus for Fusion employees. Fusion maintains a presence in the community through its support of various community events. In this manner, it is thought that community awareness of Fusion is high and the ability to network is kept fresh. Partnerships have come and gone but it may be that should a partnership become relevant again, it can be revisited. Partnerships have undergone changes in order to best suit the needs of the client and the community. This is evidenced in the ongoing partnerships with CES and the VON. The original partnerships looked differently than they do today, but attention to the relationship and the ability to foster the relationship so that the relationships evolve in a manner that suits all the stakeholders is part of the innovative process. Attention to networks and

partnerships is key to the success of the innovative process. There have been many relationships that have waxed and waned, far too many to enumerate in this work, for instance, the public health nurse once maintained a presence in the Centre, but no longer does so. This work never meant to identify each and every relationship or partnership. What has been revealed in this work was that many evolving relationships/partnerships have contributed to the success of the Centre and permeate all categories under discussion. This is a characteristic of social innovation at work.

Idea and Building Acquisition

The Ingersoll Town Council was populated with individuals that value youth. Once the Strategic Plan identified youth as one of its priorities, the Town Council acted on that mandate. In particular, lack of access to existing youth programming as a result of economics or family support resonated with the stakeholders and it is a preliminary indication of social innovation at work. The concept of inclusiveness and stakeholder participation when confronting obstacles proliferates throughout literature on social innovation. (Maxwell, 2003) (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) Particularly, including the voices of the marginalized or alienated is an aspect of social innovation at work. (Maxwell, 2003) Youth itself is often a marginalized demographic, and the number of times the research revealed during the interview process that the youth felt they had no “place” or “voice” lends credence to the idea that youth in general were an excluded demographic. Furthermore, the youth demographic can be broken down into groups that are further marginalized for a variety of reasons. Interviewees raised the issue of “at risk” youth a number of times. References to at-risk” youth versus youth that came from a “normal” home indicates the youth demographic has subsets. The continued effort to include the “voice” of all youth exemplifies social innovation at work. The idea of a Centre that values youth in general and works to include those individuals that are marginalized even within that demographic is socially innovative.

The development of Fusion included within its mandate that it was necessary that all youth be able to access the facility and its programs. Social innovation figures prominently in the philosophy of the Centre by solidifying the goal of providing a “place” for all youth, for all youth to be heard. It was important that all youth find Fusion to be accessible. Accordingly, Fusion is centrally located, and most youth can access the Centre by walking from their schools. Rural youth access the Centre after school, having already been bussed into school. It does remain that rural youth must find a way home at the end of any programming at the Centre. How rural youth access the Centre during the summer months was not revealed in the research. The Centre is youth driven, and while youth do sign in, it is the adults that are very closely scrutinized upon their arrival at the Centre. The adults must have a reason to be there and must sign in and out. There is a great deal of effort put into maintaining a culture of the value of youth, that youth are empowered, and that youth have some control in this facility. The role reversal with youth mentoring adults seems to have worked out well as the Centre evolves as the youth want to see it

evolve. This role reversal is evidence of a change in practices within the community. The adults were expected to listen to the youth, and act on the information that youth provided. The development of Fusion is a physical example of significant changes in practices within the community as the facility has evolved according to the direction of the youth. The appearance of the facility, as well as the programming at the Centre is strictly youth driven. It should be noted that it was remarkable that political will was evident and that Fusion came into being. It shouldn't be remarkable, as one interviewee noted, this is what the community wanted, but given the nature of politics, it is remarkable.

It was mentioned in the interview process there is some discussion around whether or not Fusion should be under the direction of the Parks and Recreation Department. Does a facility like Fusion fall under the mandate of the Parks and Recreation Department? Does the Parks and Recreation Department have any business providing the services that can be found at the Centre? But, it is possible that placing the Centre under the control of the Parks and Recreation Department inadvertently triggered more social innovation. The uniqueness of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre under the guidance of the Parks and Recreation Centre drew on different perspectives and approaches during the development of the Centre. Strong social innovation occurs when networking is used to incorporate novel approaches to local issues. During the interview process there were references to different individuals in various political and management roles within the town that were invested in the Centre. This brings to the table different social capital that can be utilized to move the development along. The various perspectives and relationships that were present and that evolved throughout the development of Fusion speak directly to social innovation. This is evidence of drawing on existing social capital, developing new social capital through new relationships, and nurturing relationships, even those that are not immediately relevant, at all times. One interviewee spoke of relationships that fell off, but that were renewed as the Centre went in a new direction. Social innovation requires that relationships are valued and carefully tended; nurturing these relationships ensures that social capital is available when needed.

Staffing

According to an interviewee, it is recommended that the individual responsible for managing the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre have a background in Recreation and Leisure along with some business administration course work. This individual spends a great deal of time developing partnerships and funding initiatives that will allow a quick response to the changing needs of the youth. Networking and partnerships are at the heart of social innovation. Developing many strong and weak networks and partnerships will influence the success of any initiative. (Cavalli, 2007) (Florida, Cushing, & Gates, 2009) As noted in the literature, it is the networks and partnerships that are leveraged to access resources. (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013) As the youth that frequent the Centre change rapidly, so too do the needs of the youth. For the Centre to continue to function in a relevant and productive manner, the Centre must respond quickly to the

evolving youth demographic. The manager of the Centre should be adept at securing new funding along with moving new or changing programming along quickly.

The manager position is a collaborative one, with a propensity for seeing possibilities as opposed to obstacles. The relationship between the Manager for the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre and the Director of Parks and Recreation, responsible for oversight of the Centre, seems to be respectful, open, and receptive as these two individuals may often have very opposing views of what should unfold at the Centre as a result of their differing responsibilities in their professional capacities. While the Manager will be constantly seeking new and innovative ways to meet the needs of youth, the Director may in fact be required to curtail or ground the process. It may be the case that funding can be acquired to implement a new program, but if the maintenance of that program will negatively affect the financial position of the Centre or the Municipality, then this needs to be addressed. This is a critical balancing act as it would be counterproductive to continually impede the innovative approach demonstrated by the staff at the Centre, and the very nature of this Centre requires constant change. This once again speaks to the success of the Centre being dependent on relationships.

One interviewee commented on a natural tension between staff individuals that are focused on business and programming and those staff individuals more focused on youth overall wellbeing. A youth worker focused solely on youth wellbeing may not appreciate the perspective held by another youth worker whose focus is on developing new, exciting programming, and vice versa. As previously identified, both skill sets are necessary and complementary, those youth workers with a programming/sports and leisure background, and those with a social work/psychology type background are both vital to the development of a successful centre. A strong working relationship is required to balance these two aspects of a youth activity centre. Professional development is integral to maintaining staffing relevance and competence.

The front-line youth workers are young and understand the youth with which they are currently working. It is felt that it would not be beneficial to the youth, the programs, or the Centre if the front-line workers were older and out of touch with the current realities of the youth. These individuals must be of an age and a conduct that allows the youth to connect with them while mature enough to uphold the rules of behaviour that have been instituted at the Centre. While physical age is a factor, so too is the personality of the individual employee or volunteer.

Some of the volunteers were/are older than most of the employees of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre. This in general has not been an issue as the volunteers have chosen to spend their free time this way, to offer their services to this particular client group. This choice suggests an affinity to youth, and therefore an ability to connect with the youth. There have been individuals that volunteered and in so doing, have filled “motherly” and “grandfatherly” roles, as only a couple of examples of the number of ways staff and volunteers fill voids in the lives of

youth at the Centre. One interviewee spoke about an older gentleman that would come to the Centre and spend time teaching the youth how to play pool. These wide ranging influences and relationships that extend available social capital are beneficial to Fusion.

Programming

Programming changes are driven by the youth. The youth are empowered to identify gaps or needs, but they are also expected to be part of the solution. According to Bhatt (Bhatt & Altinay, 2013), it is important to include the stakeholder in the process of addressing identified local ills. An interviewee noted that while youth were encouraged and expected to articulate the problems they faced, it was also part of the process to identify a means to rectify the problem. It is not so much that they were expected to be part of the solution that is interesting, but rather that they have been given a “voice” and that they are influential in directing the Centre.

An interviewee commented on connections made with seniors who have spent time with the youth at the Centre as the partnerships within the Fusion Youth Activity Centre are such that seniors are there for programming as well. This is not heavily substantiated as it is evident that there is little overlap between senior programming and youth programming. What is corroborated is that there is sufficient overlap between youth programming and senior programming such that youth behaviours are modified in terms of consideration of seniors. The youth recognize mobility issues and alter their conduct accordingly as well as understanding that their conduct should change in front of seniors, manners are necessary. This might be a relationship that could be developed in the future.

Funding

Fusion’s stable funding source from the municipality grounds the centre and the Centre is able to respond confidently to the evolving needs of the youth and the community, knowing that funding is not going to suddenly disappear. There were references to the current funding trends from sources such as grants that allow for creation and implementation of new and innovative programs and facilities. However, it was noted that what is lacking in this kind of funding trend is monies required to maintain these various programs and facilities once they have been successfully launched. While an individual may successfully acquire new funding to launch a new initiative, if that initiative cannot be sustained at the other end, it is reasonable to question the value of launching the initiative at all. It is unclear in the research whether or not having revenue streams or the reliable tax based funding stream alters which grants can be accessed when pursuing additional funding. Some interviewees indicated that having existing funding strategies does alter which grants can be accessed, some interviewees indicated that was not the case.

In spite of the fact that Fusion enjoys stable funding from a municipal tax base, additional funding was acquired through individuals proficient in grant writing and who fortuitously were parts of the network of those invested in the Centre during the preliminary development phase.

The initial strong networks that were part of the start-up of Fusion included individuals conversant with grant writing and educated as to which grants were available. Obtaining additional funding to complement the municipal funding continues to be concern even today. Relationships that were formed in pursuit of ancillary funding in the beginning of the development process continue today. Those relationships that were formed with the CAW, Royal Bank, and Trillium, for instance, are still in place today. Furthermore, new funding relationships have been formed, such as the relationship currently enjoyed with United Way. Fusion continues to draw on these relationships in its effort to maintain adequate funding for the Centre.

Significantly, obtaining grants is an indication that the level of service has been increased. As grants are generally not available for maintaining programming, just for the initial start-up, increasing the level of service should be done with an understanding of the cost of maintaining that service at the other end of the process. As a couple of interviewees remarked, “just because a grant is available does not mean it should be pursued.” It does little if the program cannot be maintained following start-up. Once the level of service has been upped, especially in terms of social enterprises, a tension can develop if that social enterprise is in competition with a local business. That tension would need to be understood and dealt with to maintain positive, productive community relationships. Because of these two obvious possible tensions, careful attention is needed when considering new programming. Stifling the creative and innovative practices when attending to the needs and wants of the youth is counterproductive and counterintuitive to the success of the Centre. However, social innovation requires that relationships are tended to with care as care of relationships can make the difference between success and failure of an initiative. (Cavalli, 2007) As previously observed in the relationships/networking segment, Fusion tries to attend to current relationships, and foster new relationships.

Culture

The Centre represents youth vision in the community. Practices within the community have changed so that the youth can influence the direction of the Centre because the youth now have a voice. While the Centre is youth centric, there is attention to boundaries and behaviours that must be respected within the Centre. A few interviewees commented that this is a requirement for youth to feel safe. For instance, substance abuse is not tolerated, and any youth suspected of indulging in any substances warrants a phone call home and to the police. Individuals involved with the centre re-iterated many times that youth must feel safe at Fusion, that it is a goal to provide that safe environment. The culture is representative of strong working relationships between the stakeholders. The youth do get to drive the Centre in terms of direction and programming while those adults populating the facility ensure that the environment is not only safe, it is an environment of empowerment for the youth in their own space.

Concluding Remarks

The development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre exhibits the three characteristics of social innovation. (Mulgan, Tucker, Ali, & Sanders, 2007) The Centre is hardly a wholly new concept, youth centres abound and after-school programming is utilized in many facilities throughout Ontario, indeed, throughout Canada. However, Fusion has combined various concepts to inform its after-school programming so that they are not only providing single format after-school programs whether it be a drop-in program or recreation program but rather a cross section of rather sophisticated after-school programming. Fusion has combined many types of programming to address various perceived gaps in the community.

Placing Fusion under the umbrella of the Parks and Recreation Department has engendered new perspectives on the development of the Centre. The many conversations around the idea that Fusion does not fall under the mandate of the Parks and Recreation Department indicates that developing the Centre not only brought new perspectives on youth recreation together, the second characteristic of social innovation, it ensured the evolution of new relationships as these new perspectives were forced to collaborate on the development of the youth Centre. The forging of new relationships is the third characteristic of social innovation is highly visible in the development of the Centre. The heart and soul of the process of social innovation is relationship building and networking, which is also the backbone of all six categories described in the development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre.

The development of the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre met all the stages involved in social innovation. It evolved as a highly collaborative effort within the community of Ingersoll to address unmet needs, and today looks very different from the original idea, fulfilling the first stage of the process of social innovation. It was quickly brought to market, for want of a better term; the announcement of the purchase of the building for development of a youth centre was made publicly, without any written policy or plan to precede the announcement. Quick movement to market is the second stage of social innovation. There is some evidence that the Centre has languished somewhat in the third stage, the most difficult stage, of social innovation. The third stage of social innovation involves diffusion and proliferation of a successful project. Evidence does suggest the Centre to be successful locally, however, there is no evidence that youth centres mimicking Fusion are cropping up elsewhere at this time, although whether or not there are other similar centres was not researched. One individual remarked that it is difficult to get the complete support for such a project in other communities. This stage of the process is often hindered by a lack of key individuals to grow and diffuse the idea. And lastly, the fourth stage of innovation speaks to the original idea being taken in new directions. What began as a simple youth centre, a “place” for youth, a tool that would give youth a “voice” in the community has evolved into all that and more. Fusion is a community hub, a provider of community services, and a resource for business and community.

The Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre is highly representative of the social innovation. The unmet needs of the local youth triggered the development of the Centre and the development is a result of social capital, or networking. It is the result of collaborative efforts across many disciplines, and while a youth centre is not a novel idea, the resulting youth centre in Ingersoll is unique in the varied services it has rolled out over time. Previous work on the Fusion Youth Activity and Technology Centre would suggest the Centre has bettered the community. (Cross, 2012), (Khan B. , 2012)

Future Study Possibilities

An interviewee noted that because the employees of Fusion are all municipal employees, employed through the Department of Parks and Recreation, the pay scale is unusually high for a not-for-profit organization. An analysis as to the impact of higher paying employment might shed an interesting perspective.

Philosophically speaking, an analysis of the terms “safe” and “empowerment” might be interesting. Both terms were used frequently when talking about goals of the Centre, to keep the youth safe, to empower the youth. In the interview process, they were used together frequently and it begs the question, is someone empowered simply through ensuring safety when they are participating in society?

Future work might include developing more external or weaker relationships in order to fuel continued social innovation and develop greater social capital. Areas with extensive weaker, external social relationships demonstrate high rates of social innovation. (Florida, Cushing, & Gates, 2009) Ingersoll, and Fusion, have already demonstrated the usefulness of its local social capital, it is perhaps time to develop some external social capital.

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Appendix I

Table 1

Table 1: Current Fusion Program and Program Descriptions

Program	Program Description
Art Breaks	Art breaks is a program offered to youth between 12 and 18. The program offers basic and advanced drawing techniques from object and figure drawing, character design, perspective and basic design. The program also provides professional grade artists materials from sketch book, canvases, paints, markers, spray paint, clay etc.
Digital Game Development	This program is offered in collaboration with Fanshawe College whereby youth learn what is required to create and develop original games, applications and web-based interactive media using the latest in game development software and Fusion's gaming computers.
Fitness Program	This program focuses on choice and suitability as Fusion youth have a range of choices to participate in different forms of traditional sport through to functional fitness exercise. The focus of the program is on well-being and teaching the youth about fitness, nutrition, health and wellness and healthy lifestyle choices.
Girls Group	The girls get together to discuss difficult topics. In addition, they may collectively participate in recreational activities and learn different life skills including cooking and personal hygiene. Also, various guest speakers are brought in to address topics of interest to the female adolescents such as eating disorders, self-esteem, domestic abuse and other health issues.
Hockey Night at Fusion	This program is intended to provide youth with physical exercise while promoting sportsmanship, improving hockey skills, making new friends and having fun.
Ingersoll Youth Advisory Group	This leadership development program is intended to act as an advisory body that brings forth youth issues in Ingersoll, communicating them and promoting action to be taken to appropriate stakeholders. In doing this it promotes a positive image of youth in the community and promotes youth to be involved in meaningful community activities with other stakeholders and partners.

It's All About the Guys	This program is a leadership program for male adolescents and provides opportunities to discuss issues of concern to them, engage in competitive and cooperative sports, appreciate cinema through private screenings and learning about and utilizing other community program and services.
Nutrition Program	Youth learn about nutritious meal planning, preparation, and cleaning through hands-on experience in Fusion's kitchen.
Tracy's Diner	Youth who participate in this learn about and participate in meal preparation in addition to receiving a free meal. Meals are available for other youth who do not participate in this program for a minimal charge.
Music Program	Free music lessons are available to youth in the following areas: drums, guitar, bass and percussion. Participants learn such concepts as tempo, bars, beats, chords and are encouraged to practice. One on one instruction is provided to youth with programs tailored to their specific abilities. Instruments are provided.
Open Jam	This program brings youth together to use making music and dancing with others as a form of self-expression and as a means of managing stress.
Photography and Graphic Design	Youth are introduced to cameras and are taught everything from the basics through to advanced photography. In addition, youth are introduced to programs such as Adobe Creative Suite Illustrator and Photoshop and are taught about logo and poster design for businesses.
Radio Broadcasting	In partnership with 104.7 Heart FM youth develop their broadcasting skills with the help of real life on the air personalities. Youth have an opportunity to host a show on Fusion's closed circuit radio station.
ReBuildIT	Youth learn to use, build, troubleshoot and repair computers. There is also an emphasis on environmental responsibility and the appropriate disposal of electronics through recycling. Currently Fusion partners with an e-waste firm in disassembling electronics for safe disposal.
Recording Studio	In Fusion's state-of-the-art professional studio youth learn about all areas of production and development of production skills. Youth are encouraged to record and mix their own music or music of their friends.
Video Editing	Youth learn all facets of video production from pre-production through to editing and post-

	production. They have an opportunity to put their skills to work by assisting with Fusion TV, a Fusion based show which is aired on the local cable channel.
Youth Entrepreneurship Partnership Program	The main goals of YEPP are to be able to provide resources and support to youth with creative business ideas.

Table 2

Table 2: Current Fusion Social Enterprises

Social Enterprise	Social Enterprise Description
Multimedia Production	Provides a one-stop shop for multimedia needs including videography, photography, video editing, graphic design and printing.
Digital and Audio Recording	Offers a fully equipped studio for a wide variety of recording and audio services, including a professional recording engineer (along with trained youth). Also provides live audio services for community and private events.
Computer Services	The Fusion ReBuildIT program is an approved site by the Ontario Electronic Stewardship Program as an e-waste collection site and is also authorized as a Microsoft Refurbisher and sells refurbished computers. This service also provides PC troubleshooting and repair, PC setup and installation, hardware/software installation and upgrades, anti-virus installation and removal, PC training and tutoring and repair services.