Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals
Our Recreation System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow
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Prepared for:
Saskatchewan Association of
Recreation Professionals

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Introduction

The Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals (S.A.R.P.) is a member organization committed to the recreation profession by representing and supporting current and future recreation professionals. S.A.R.P. held a Professional Development Day, AGM and 50th Anniversary for its membership on September 12th, at which Praxis Consulting Ltd. facilitated a session on 'Our Recreation System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow'.

As part of the presentation on September 12th, Praxis engaged the attendees of the conference in a number of questions addressing:
- socio-economic trends forcing change in recreation;
- predicting the leisure needs of individuals and communities in Saskatchewan 25 years out;
- designing the future; and,
- changing at the practitioner level.

The following report provides a highlight of the presentation and the key findings that the attendees discussed.

Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals
Our Recreation System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

Presentation Highlights
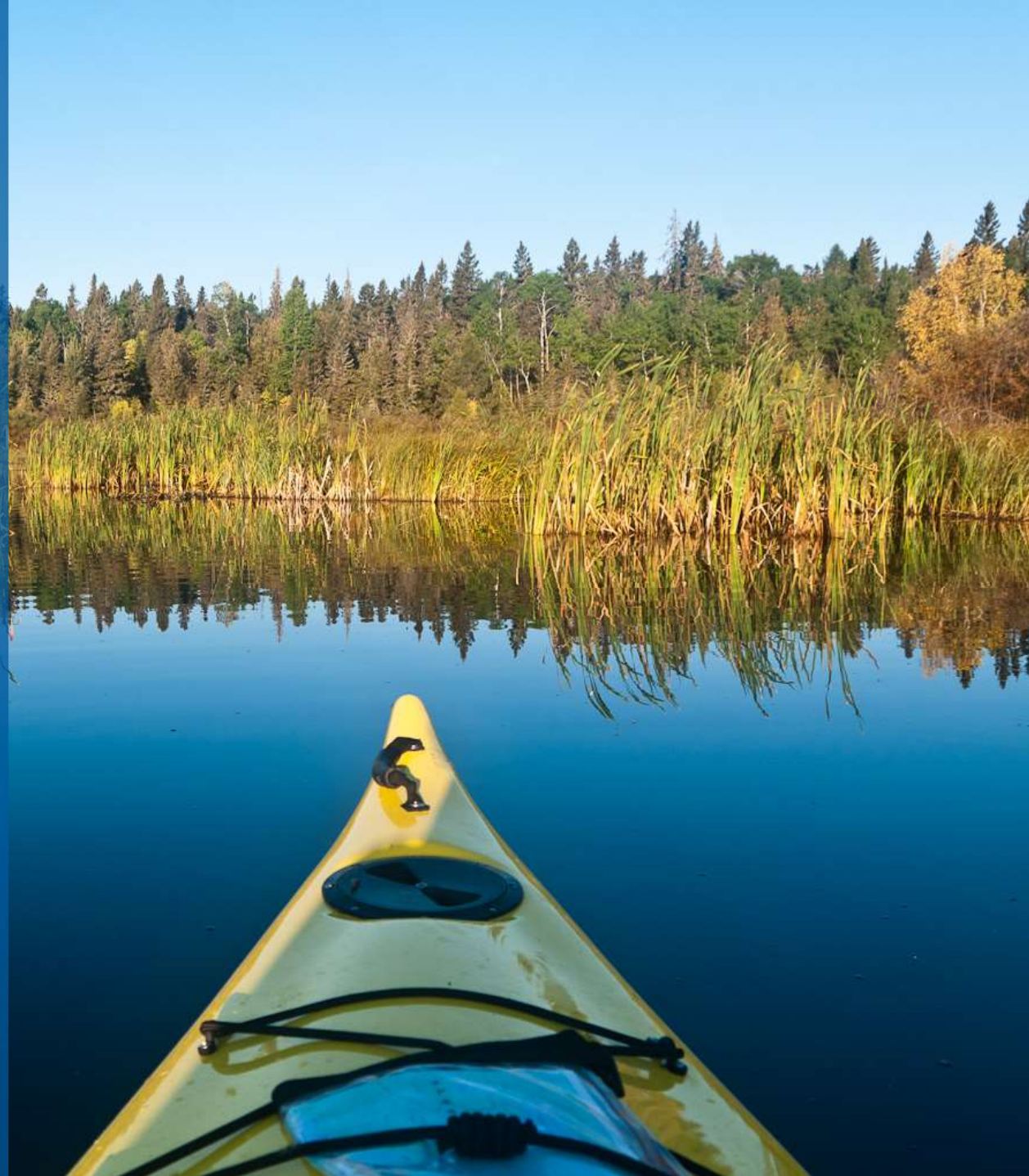
Our Recreation System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

OUR CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMY

RECREATION IN THE 1960'S

In the 1960's the provincial training program for recreation directors was developed, leading toward the Kelsey Recreation Diploma Program which launched in 1969. During this time, the first operator course for arenas and swimming pools also began. As of 1964, there were 68 municipal recreation authorities and 11 recreation directors. By 1972 this increased to 505 authorities and 56 recreation directors; by 1979 this further expanded to 744 authorities with 80 recreation directors.


OUR POPULATION

As of 1968, during a peak time of recreational growth as mentioned above, Saskatchewan had an estimated population of 960,000. Currently, the Saskatchewan population is growing at a healthy pace. In the fourth quarter of 2018, the population grew at an annual rate of 0.9% and 0.3% to the second quarter of 2019. As of 2019 the population is estimated at 1,169,131. The Conference Board of Canada forecasts the provincial population of Saskatchewan to grow by 1.3% in 2020 and 1.5% in 2021. With rapid population growth, communities needed programs in place to keep our children and youth busy.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Underlying our population growth has been profound demographic shifts. In 1966, the province's population was concentrated in the 0-19 age groups, as indicated by Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Population Pyramid Province 1966
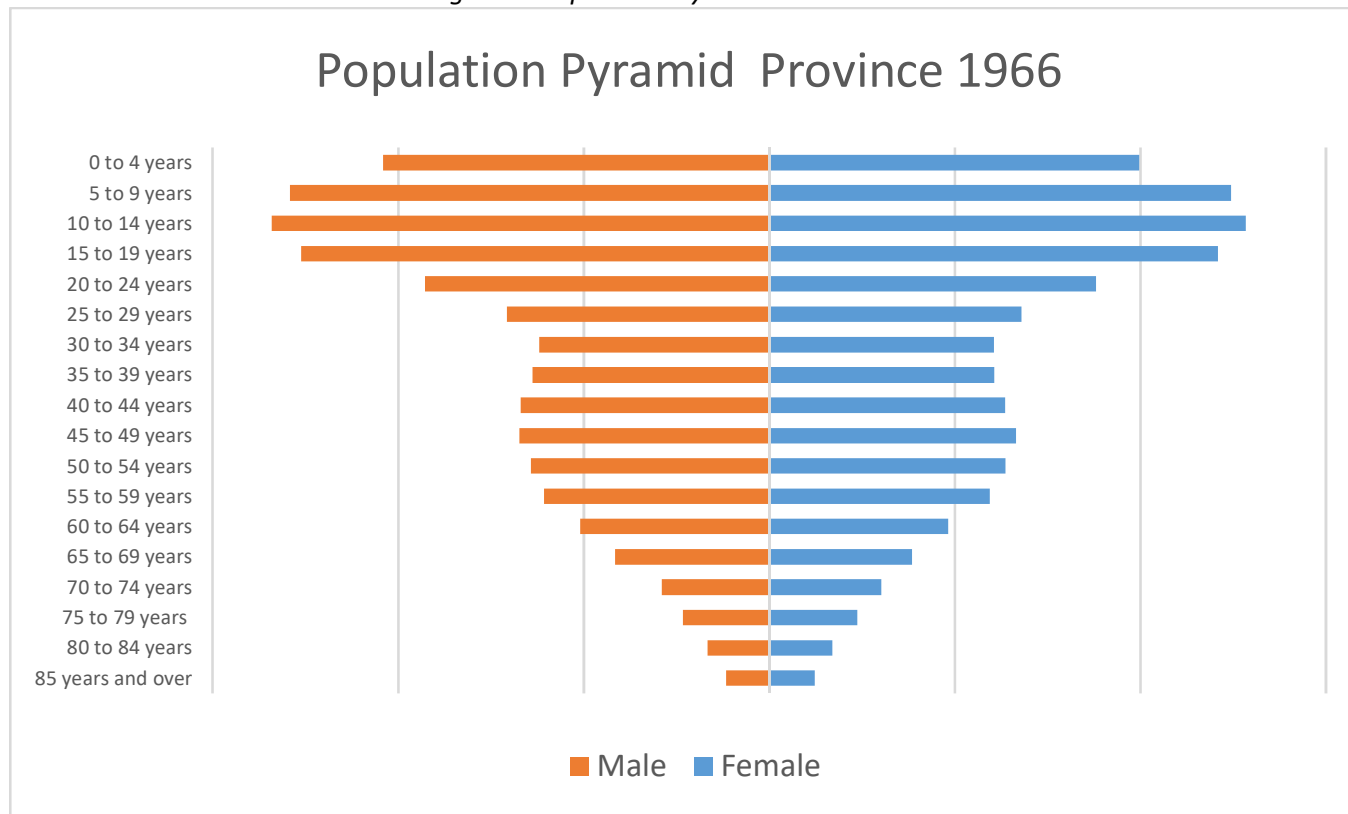
For the recreation sector this meant extensive programs built for youth and opportunities to share program costs across homogeneous groups of people; hockey programs filled arenas, summer swim programs filled swimming pools, the scouting movement was full as were many other recreation organizations.

In 2016, the 1966 demographic shown in Figure 1 as the 0-19 age group is now in the 50 to 64 age group, as indicated in Figure 2. Younger age cohorts are now typically international in-migrants and Indigenous. This changes the recreation sector landscape primarily with increased diversity and less opportunity to share costs across homogenous groupings – resulting in limited economies of scale.

Figure 2: Population Pyramid Province 2016
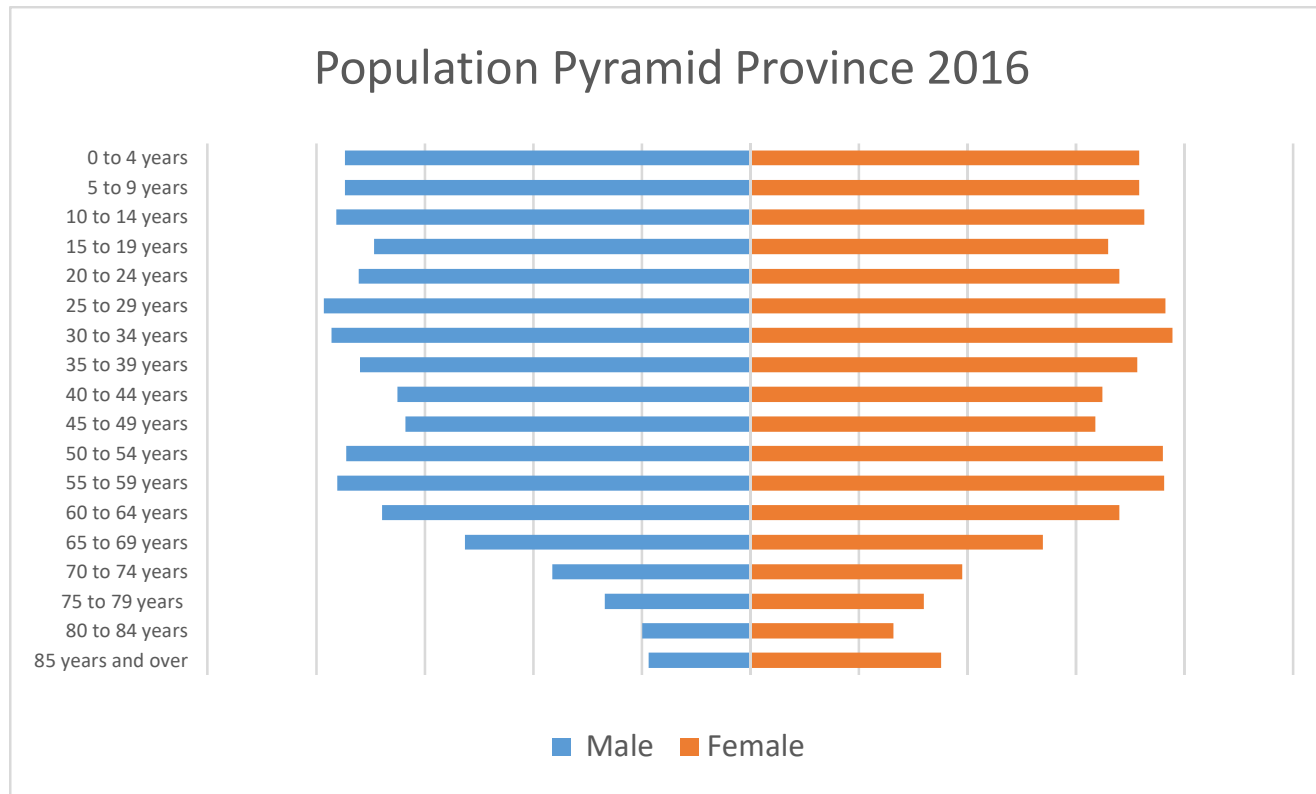
INTERNATIONAL IN-MIGRATION

Driving Saskatchewan's population growth has been international in-migration (immigration). Saskatchewan immigration has outstripped natural increase (births less deaths) as the leading contributor of population growth since, and including, 2009. Since 2016, immigration is more than double the natural increase and immigration is only marginally offset by emigration. As a sector, recreation is impacted by these population shifts as there is an increased diversity of interests.

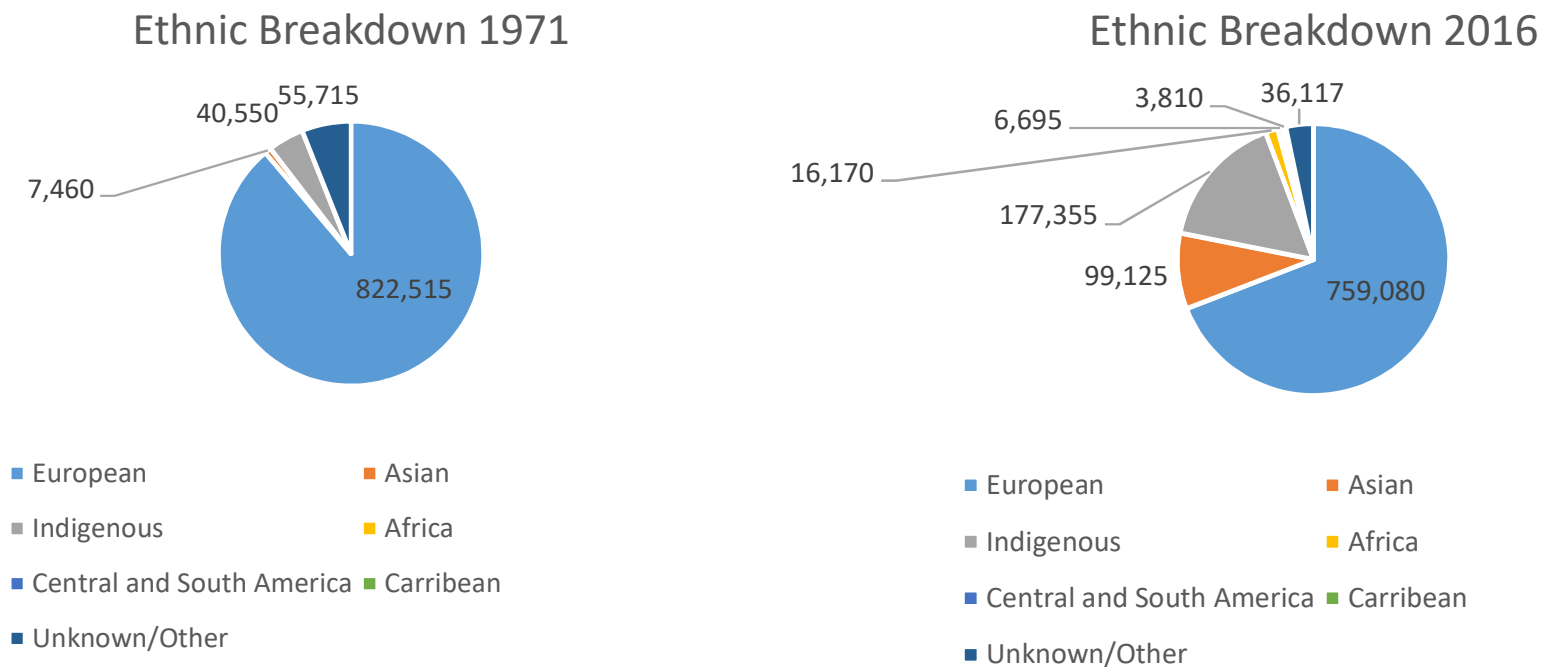*Figure 3: Sources of Population Growth – Saskatchewan – 2002 to 2018*
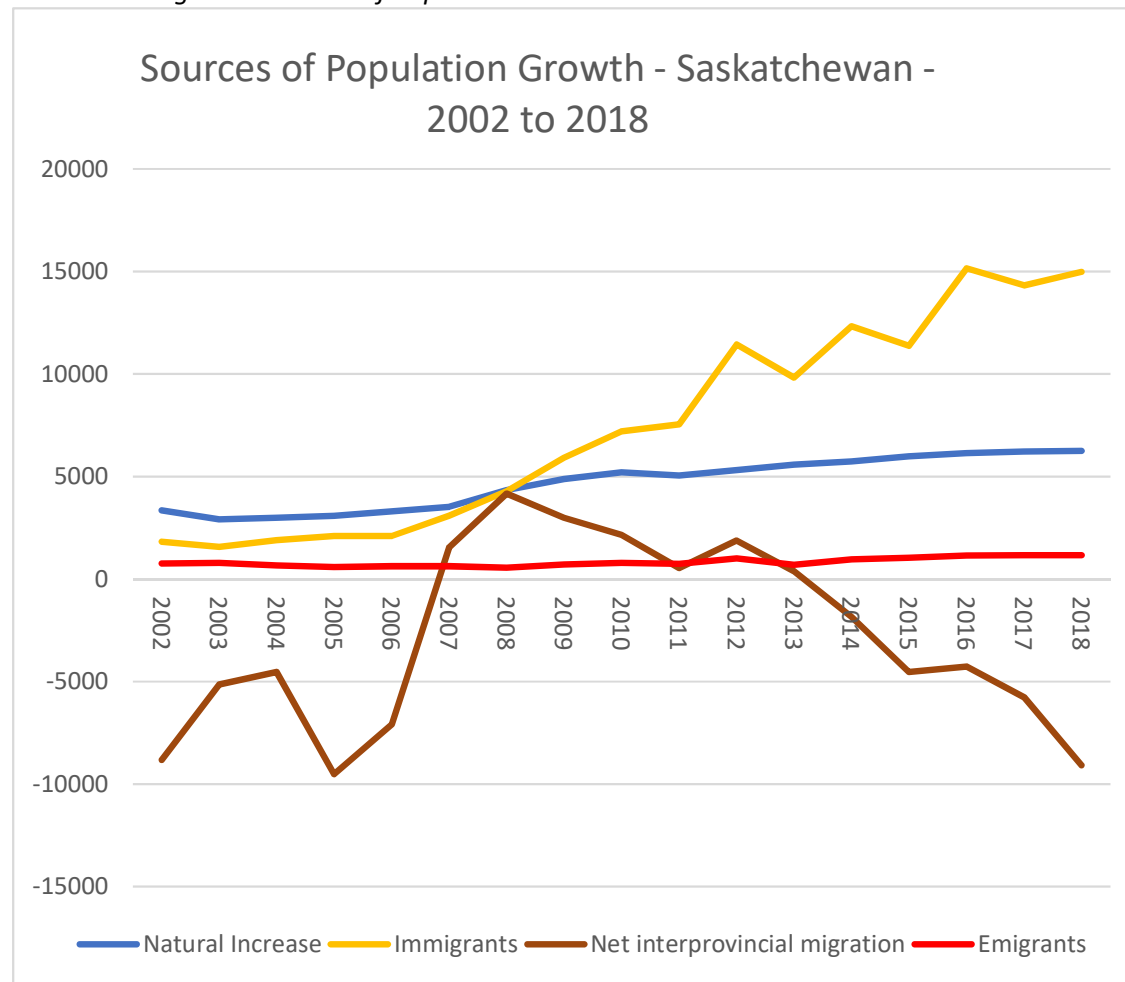
ETHNICITY

In 1971 the recreation sector was developing a system that was largely Eurocentric and represented westernized values. Typically, volunteerism was an expectation and women stayed home with their children. Recreation is now serving a broader audience; cultural differences must be accommodated and opportunities for economies of scale are declining.

Figure 4: Ethnic Breakdown

Ethnic Breakdown 1971

822,515
55,715
40,550
7,460

- European
- Asian
- Indigenous
- Africa
- Central and South America
- Carribean
- Unknown/Other

Ethnic Breakdown 2016

759,080
99,125
177,355
16,170
6,695
3,810
36,117

- European
- Asian
- Indigenous
- Africa
- Central and South America
- Carribean
- Unknown/Other

URBAN RURAL SPLIT

In 1966, those living in Saskatchewan's 11 cities accounted for 39.5% of the province's population while the rest (rural) accounted for 60.5%. Towns could afford recreation resources and community recreation was thriving along with these small communities. Town fairs, parades, exhibition associations, rodeos, baseball programs, etc. were abundant. By 2016, this proportion had completely reversed itself with 56.2% in urban areas and 43.8% in rural areas. The population in Saskatchewan's towns are declining and aging.

Figure 5: Urban Rural Distribution 1966 vs 2016
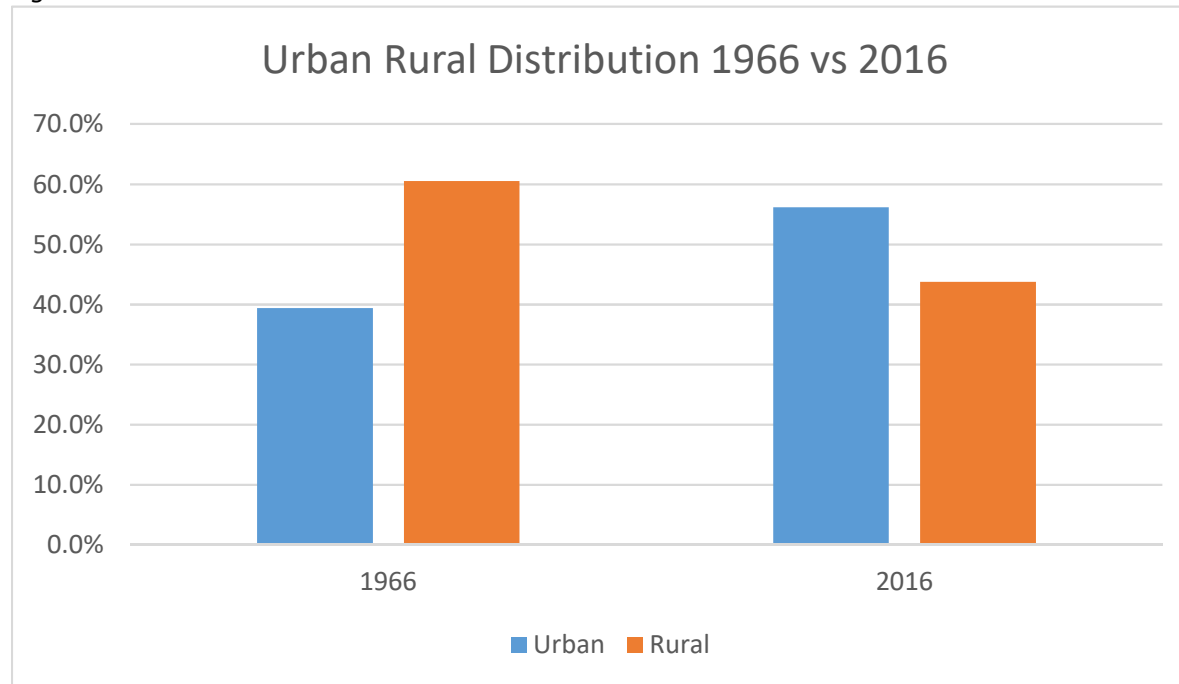
In 2016, the percentage of the Saskatchewan population in Regina and Saskatoon was 48%.

Population	2016 Census
Saskatoon CMA	295,095
Regina CMA	236,481
Saskatchewan	1,098,352
Regina/Saskatoon % of Total	48.4%

One factor driving the change in the urban rural population distribution has been technological change in agriculture. In 1976, there were 96,600 employed in agriculture or 25% of the province's workforce. By 2018, this had dropped to 37,200 or 7% of the province's employed labour force.

Figure 6: Agricultural Employment 1976 to 2019

Agricultural Employment 1976 to 2018
Saskatchewan % of Total
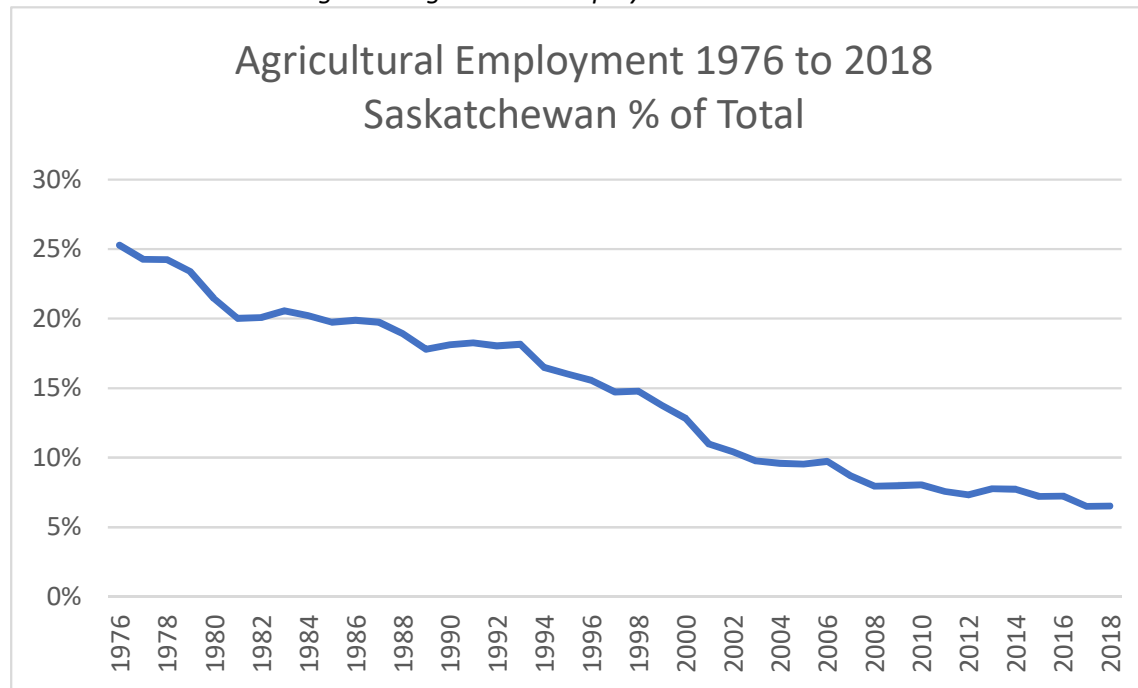
EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY

Saskatchewan has a much more diversified economy now than it did 40 to 50 years ago with healthier resource and service sectors, as indicated by Figures 7 and 8.

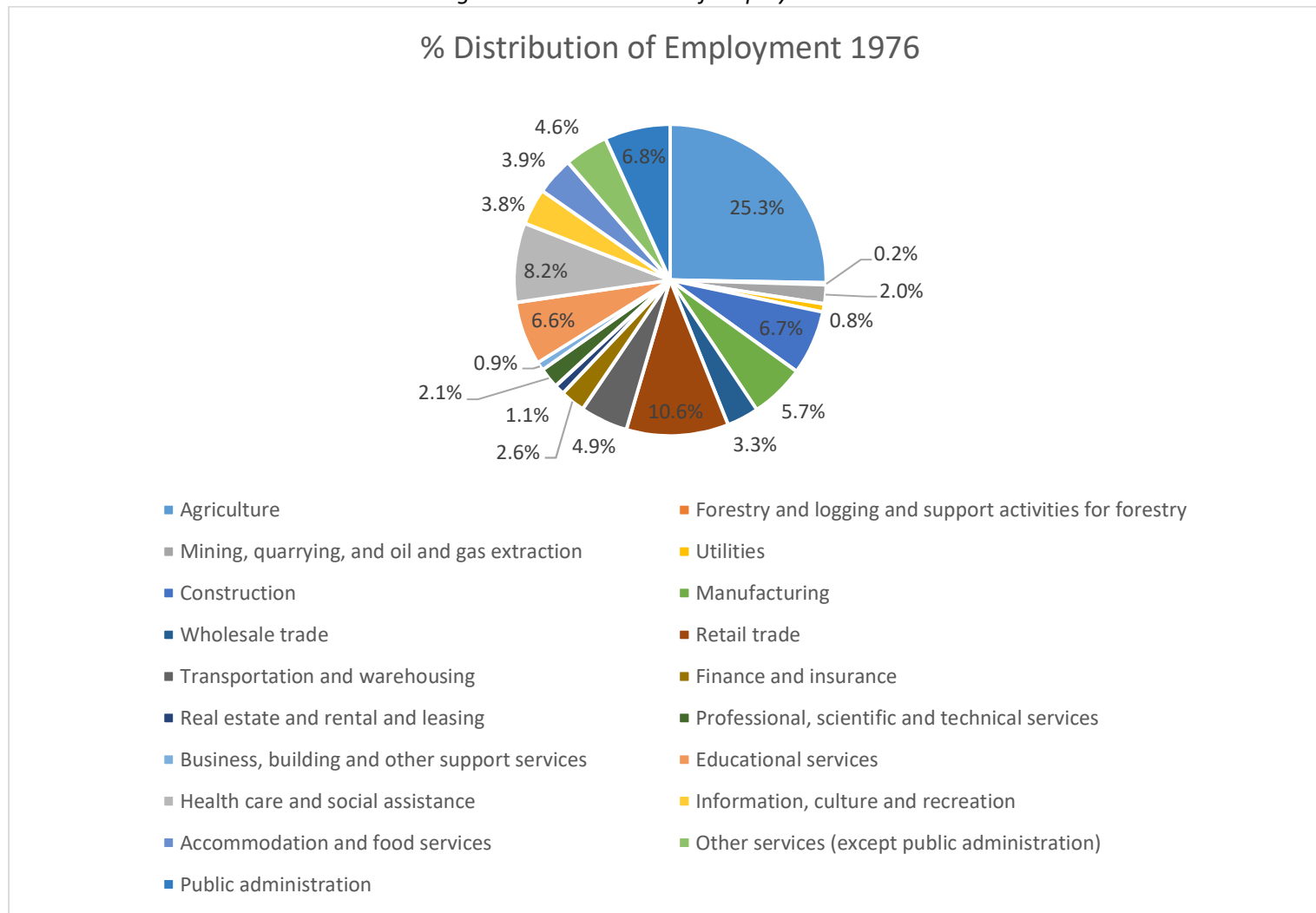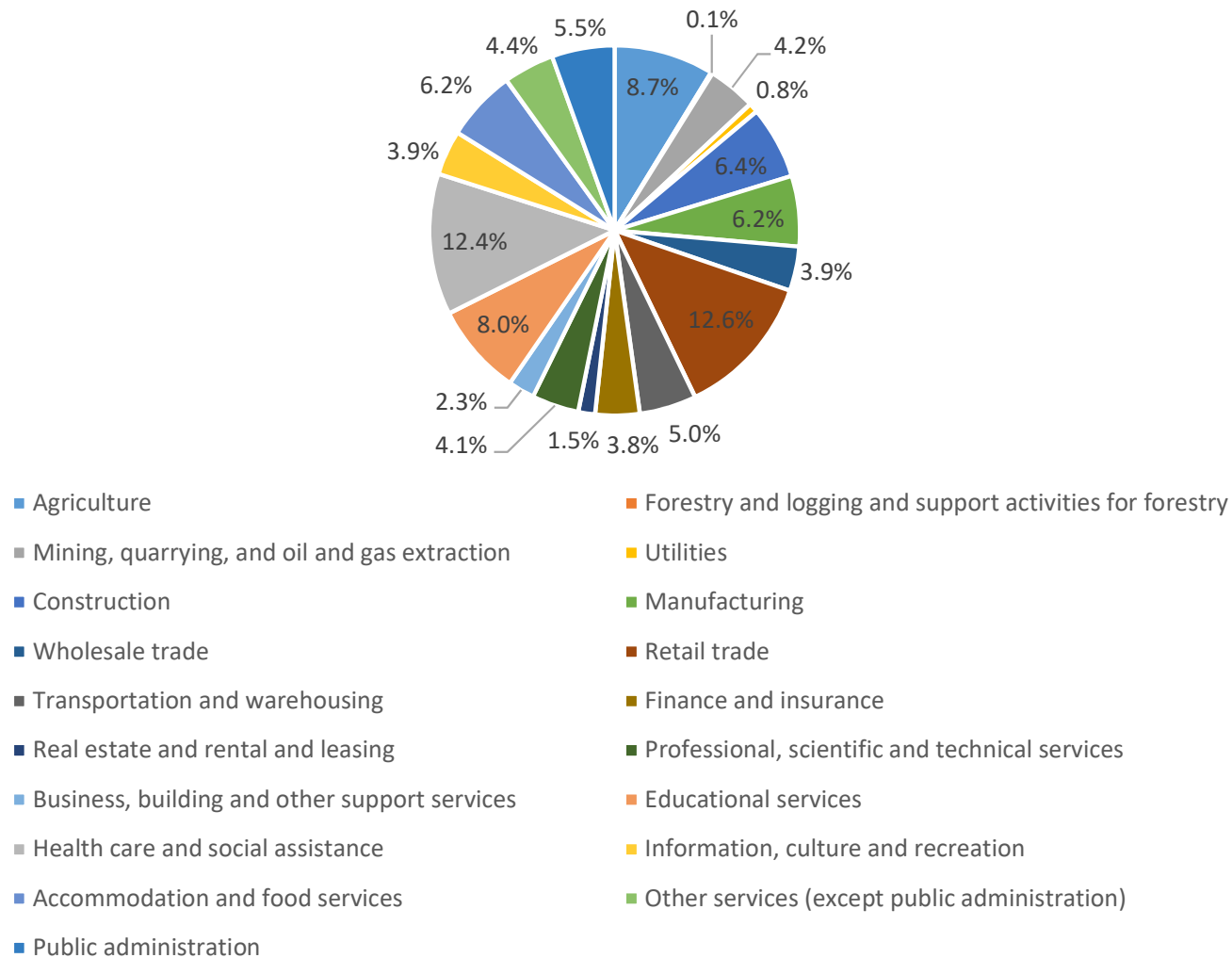*Figure 7: % Distribution of Employment 1976*

% Distribution of Employment 1976

- Agriculture
- Forestry and logging and support activities for forestry
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Utilities
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Transportation and warehousing
- Finance and insurance
- Real estate and rental and leasing
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Business, building and other support services
- Educational services
- Health care and social assistance
- Information, culture and recreation
- Accommodation and food services
- Other services (except public administration)
- Public administration

Figure 8: % Distribution of Employment 2018

% Distribution of Employment 2018

- Agriculture
- Forestry and logging and support activities for forestry
- Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction
- Utilities
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Transportation and warehousing
- Finance and insurance
- Real estate and rental and leasing
- Professional, scientific and technical services
- Business, building and other support services
- Educational services
- Health care and social assistance
- Information, culture and recreation
- Accommodation and food services
- Other services (except public administration)
- Public administration

LOOKING AHEAD

By 2045, Saskatchewan's population will be visibly different than today. Praxis conducted a number of population forecasts. Using provincial average birth and death rates for European and Immigrant heritage, Indigenous specific birth and death rates, and maintaining international in-migration at 5 year average levels (14,000 per year), we anticipate the immigrant population to continue expanding to account for 41% of the total population in 2045. At the same time, those of European heritage drops to 42% of the total and the Indigenous population advances slightly to 17%.

Population	2016	2045	Percent of Total 2016	Percent of Total 2045
European	759,080	580,652	69%	42%
Immigrant	125,800	570,681	11%	41%
Indigenous	177,355	228,627	16%	17%
Unknown/Other	36,117	0		
Total	**1,098,352**	**1,379,960**		

In 2045, Saskatoon and Regina will account for 62% of the province's population with the rural population dropping to 26%. We also anticipate that the trend of increasing urbanization of the population will continue over the next 25 years. In 2045, Saskatoon and Regina will account for 62% of the province's population with the rural population dropping to 26%.

	2016	2045	Percent of Total 2016	Percent of Total 2045
Saskatoon CMA	295,095	490,880	27%	36%
Regina CMA	236,481	365,629	22%	26%
Other Cities	155,758	169,983	14%	12%
Rural	411,018	353,469	37%	26%
Total	**1,098,352**	**1,379,960**		

Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals
Our Recreation System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

What We Heard

Our Recreation System Today & Tomorrow

The Saskatchewan Association of Recreation Professionals held a Professional Development Day, AGM and 50th Anniversary for its membership on September 11th, 2019. Over 140 participants were in attendance, including practitioners in community recreation; practitioners in therapeutic recreation; educators; students; and others in the sector. During this conference Praxis Consulting Ltd. facilitated a presentation and discussion on 'Our Recreation System Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow', as highlighted in the previous chapter. Participants were asked to take part in a number of questions in response to the presentation. Below are the key findings that participants shared amongst their groups.

PREDICTING RECREATION NEEDS IN THE FUTURE

LEISURE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES IN THE FUTURE

Conference participants were asked to engage with the members at their table on the following questions:

- What will be the leisure needs of individuals and communities?
- Will the recreation sector be positioned to deliver on these needs? Why or Why not?

Participants noted a number of factors that will impact the leisure needs of individuals and communities in the future. Some areas that we heard multiple contributions included:

- increasing physical and mental health needs;
- a need for diversity in programming, including activities and spaces for newcomers;
- a shift in needs due to lifestyle changes such as increased use of technology; and,
- new requirements for infrastructure and facilities, which included concerns for the current aging infrastructure.

The complete list of future leisure needs that participants discussed are highlighted in Appendix A, presented in verbatim format.

SECTOR PREPAREDNESS TO DELIVER ON FUTURE NEEDS

The second question the participants were asked to consider was whether the recreation sector is positioned to deliver on the future needs they identified. This led to more in-depth discussions about what the sector needs to be ready for, and how it will achieve this, all of which are included in Appendix B (verbatim). A few highlights in relation to the four main areas of need identified in question one, are as follows:

- there will be a significant demand and opportunity for positions in health;
- it will be important to retain recreation professionals and promote recreation training to diverse groups and individuals;
- as a sector, recreation needs to identify ways to embrace technology in a way that is positive; and,
- facilities need to be purpose built.

Participants noted that partnerships, relationship development in communities, collaboration in funding and education will be significant contributors towards meeting the future needs. They also mentioned some concerns that may hinder the sector's ability to deliver on future needs, as noted below.

Concern Over Resources

It was identified that not-for-profit sustainability is always an issue for the sector. Further to this, some participants expressed concern that there are not enough resources to sustain what the sector needs. Some participants also questioned whether rural municipalities will be able to afford to accommodate the needs of the new multi-cultural population.

Preparedness for Change

It was identified that the sector is slightly behind the curve in terms of upcoming trends and needs to keep working towards future changes. However, this was countered by other participants who noted that the sector can meet future needs because it is engaged in research and actively works to improve goals and strategies. On a similar note, it was mentioned that training and networking sessions for recreation professionals is imperative for the future success of the field, allowing those in the sector to have access to continuous learning. Some participants mentioned a concern about resistance to change and the risks at play as the sector attempts to make changes toward the future.

DESIGNING THE FUTURE OF RECREATION

PRIMARY CHANGES NEEDED

After establishing the future needs in the sector and considering the sector's preparedness to address these needs, participants were asked the following questions:

- What primary changes are needed to ensure the recreation sector can respond to changes in our communities?
- How do we ensure that we remain relevant to our customers?

As participants deliberated on these questions in groups, a number of key themes came forward:

- funding and resource solutions including considerations for collaboration of funding;
- addressing the challenge of declining volunteer involvement, finding ways to overcome time constraints and stress of volunteering;
- adapting to become more inclusive to diverse populations, including more inclusive programming;
- engaging with the community broadly and more often;
- creating more diverse and robust partnerships;
- utilizing the existing park/outdoor space;
- continuing to tell the story of the importance of the sector and the benefits of recreation, by establishing it as an essential service and supporting this through research; and,
- enhancing knowledge sharing within the sector.

A full summary of the ideas shared for designing the future of recreation can be found in Appendix C, presented verbatim.

CHANGE AT THE PRACTITIONER LEVEL

IMPACT OF THIS CONVERSATION ON FUTURE NEEDS OF RECREATION

As a final discussion topic, the participants were asked to consider the following:

- Has this conversation impacted you as a recreation professional and the way you will practice in the future?
- If so, what will you do differently as a recreation practitioner to meet the needs of the future?

In response to these questions, participants noted the need to advocate and promote the sector, ensuring clients and the broader community recognize recreation as an essential service. They recognized the need to take pride in the sector and put energy into advocating and promoting its benefits. With this increased promotion, participants recognized the need for relationship building, partnerships and overall improved communication with their clients. Internally, they recognized the need for information sharing and continuous education and training.

Participants talked about being more open-minded, and actively listening to better understand the needs of their community. They recognized the need to incorporate diversity and inclusivity in the work they do. They specifically mentioned engagement with diverse populations including Chief and Council of Indigenous communities in their districts, and the aging population.

The graffiti wall images below further depicts what the groups determined to be most significant with regards to what they will do differently as a recreation practitioner to meet the needs of the future.

Graffiti Wall Ideas
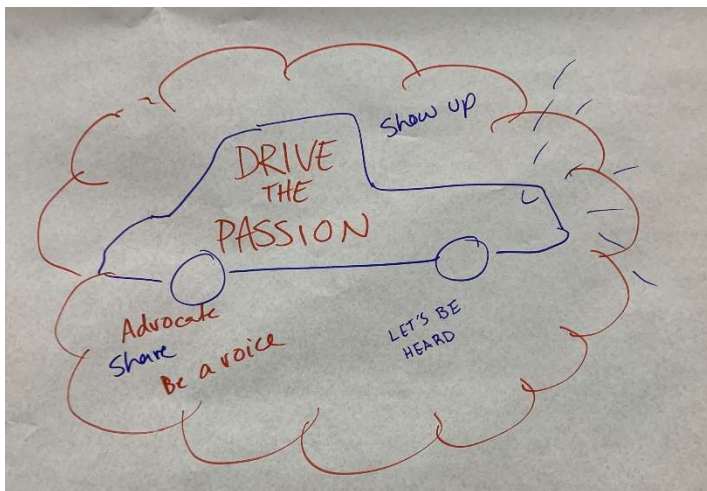
Practitioners, including Students actively participate in sector initiatives and professional development opportunities to increase the Leadership capacity of themselves, their state and the Sector!

$

(More funding)

(looking forward + anticipating trends)

Partnerships

Using technology and resources to impact people.

Intentional recruitment, training & retention of recreation Professionals of all diverse backgrounds To better reflect Saskatchewan.

MORE DIVERSE (universal) ACTIVITIES

"Developed for different Sectors & decision makers"

Stories. About. Rec. & Community Development
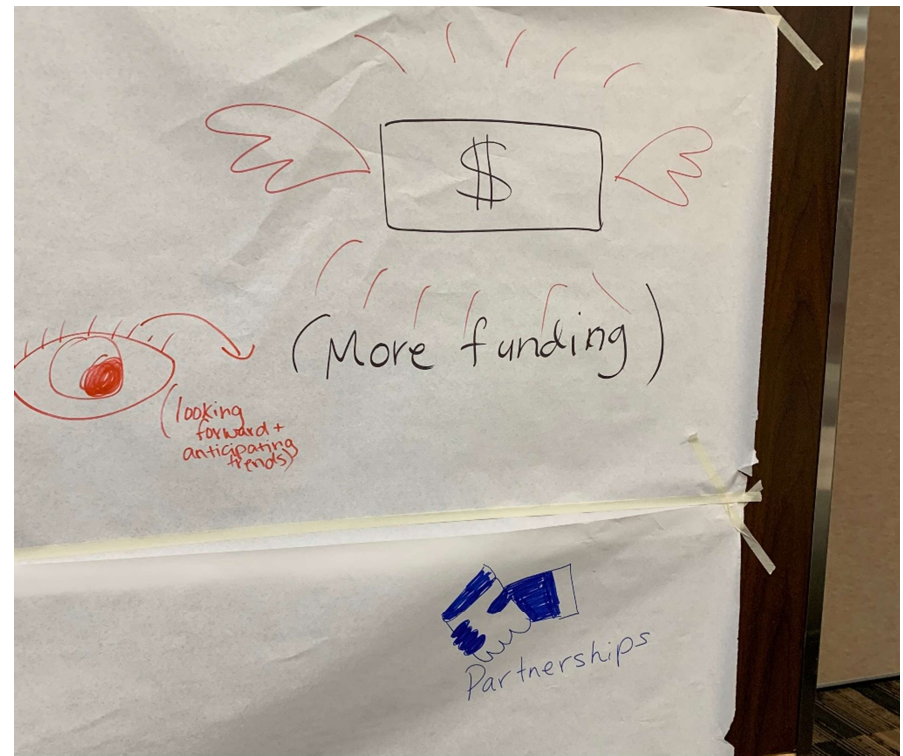
Appendix A: What will be the leisure needs of individuals and communities?

Table includes verbatim answers shared by conference participants in their groups.

Leisure Needs of Individuals and Communities	Additional Details
Accessibility	• Limited mobility in 25 years to stay in the cities • We need more adaptable facilities • Assisted living facilities – lots popping up now. Where will they be in 25 years? ○ Rehab – changes in cultures and families wanting to keep loved ones at home • Volunteers are charity – is leisure and recreation just a charity only accessible to those who can afford it? • More inclusive programming
Change in Programming	• Different/diverse structures • Less structure (big organization and systems are full) • Need to focus on partnerships ○ Sharing resources and facilities • Multi-sectoral
Climate change	• Making/updating facilities to be used year-round

Diversity in Programming	• Expanding our sport and leisure activities to allow immigrant populations to access leisure they understand
	• Language (generally) and sport language
	• Cultural differences (i.e., hockey vs. cricket)
	• Newcomers need free space
	    ○ Access to play areas for families to provide experiences that are cultural norms
	    ○ Large families require space for gatherings
	    ○ "What is it about those spaces (i.e. Wascana Park) that people are going to?"
	    ○ Going back to open space – spontaneous play
	    ○ Volunteers are charity – is leisure and recreation just a charity only accessible to those who can afford it?
	• Small neighborhoods
	• Having programs / events that specifically target diverse populations
	    ○ Might be the only opportunity for them to feel comfortable in a recreation setting
	• City/urban focused recreation

	• Need more multicultural leisure ○ More immigrants – traditional Canadian values: hockey, football, rodeos • More inclusive programming
Economics of People Will Shift	• Economics will split so that some can afford programming and elite programming and others need free or low-cost programs
Education System	• The education system may not invest in physical activity (they currently are not) • Revising the curriculum • Meeting the needs of international and local students
Engagement	• Need to engage public input • Need partnerships
Family focus	• Full engagement vs. only the kids • No trained/available leaders, especially in small or northern communities • Schools and available opportunities to give children and change the attitude to stand out • Families will be different – some smaller families and older parents • New Canadian families – larger families and younger parents
Funding	• "How do we get more money for my community?"

Health (physical and mental)	• Socio-economic status is related to the cost of health and the options available
	• Social interaction
	• Will be a need for more physical/mental healthcare
	    ○ Recreation could be the change to avoid more prescriptions
	    ○ Provide a holistic alternative
	    ○ Emerging and increasing mental health needs

Home-based Leisure	• low cost, easily accessible

Infrastructure/Facilities	• Lack of use, quality, purpose age, majority vs. minority
	• Need allocation of renewed facilities to play new sports (i.e., Cricket)
	• This requires extra funding
	• Multipurpose spaces
	• Change in traditional facilities
	    ○ Outdoor rink/tennis
	    ○ Spray park play structure
	• Still need the winter access to trails

	• Less concentrated costs on ONE facility and spread cost to make more facilities (more simplicity) • 1967 built facilities, do we even need them now • Recreation facilities are on poor land • We need more adaptable facilities • Newcomers need free space
Lifestyle Changes	• Neighborhood structure (car-centric vs. walkable) • Attitudes – peoples' viewpoints on recreation • Technology being attributed to kids being less active ○ How to utilise technology • Very "me-centered" society • Cultural differences / different worldviews and communication methods • City/urban focused recreation • More activities for personal interaction in the next 25 years, because technology has impacted this
Recreation Education	• Need to teach post secondary for 20 years in the future, not just for right now • Two-way education (i.e., with newcomers) • Balance between knowing, learning, teaching • Community building & personal relationships
Specialization	• People focused on one area of programming; less transitional/multi-activity • High schools encouraging only one type
Volunteers	• Need volunteers

Appendix B: Will the recreation sector be positioned to deliver on these needs? why or why not?

Table includes verbatim answers shared by conference participants in their groups.

Recreation Sector Positioned to Deliver on the future needs in Appendix A	Additional Details
Advocacy and Promotion	- Develop a clear position and message on recreation and the needs it fulfills - Need to advocate the message over and over - Be proactive and take our message beyond our field - RM's need to be involved (regional base facilities rather than always urban based) - We can be in the position to deliver on the future needs but we need to start planning now
Climate	Altered activities due to climate change
Diversity & Accessibility in Programming	- LGBTQ+ - Culturally inclusive – language, training, rec programs - Inclusivity- recognition of LGBTQ+, sensory needs, physical, etc. - Retain recreation professionals and promote recreation training to diverse groups/individuals - Diverse leisure needs to cater to different types of people - Parking/ more transportation - Need to have something for everybody - Having a more diverse model - Youth focused - Family programming - Newcomer pop-in - Urbanisation - Income disparity - Accessibility - Different types of activities - Activities with pets - Lack of adult/family play (community based)

	• Saskatchewan is focused on hockey in so many communities, we need to focus on other things (elite views – Wayne Gretsky theory) • More inclusivity • New or foreign disabilities to consider?
Education System	• Education – yes, if they don't fulfill then someone will need to (caveat is the value and relationships recognized)
Engagement & Education	• Proactive engagement • Yes, as we are constantly doing research and improving our goals and strategies • Training and networking sessions for rec professionals is crucial for the future and success of this field (education is key) • Need to focus on the greater community • More focus on regional work
Facilities & Infrastructure	• Change is necessary • Need more emphasis on family/adult programming and sustainability of infrastructure • Ageing infrastructure • Engage and purpose-built facilities • Adaptable ○ Adapt facilities for new activities • Not enough resources to sustain what we need • Priorities will be inclusivity for new developments • Facilities are driven politically
Funding Priorities & Resources	• compiling resources between sectors • Elevating the role of recreation in community budgets/decision making • Budgets • Not for profit sustainability may hinder our ability to deliver • Are rural municipalities going to be able to afford to accommodate the needs of this new multi-cultural population? • Funding? • Disparity in community resources will impact the ability to deliver
Health	• There will be a massive demand and opportunity for positions • Obesity – more programs for people with chronic disease

	• More partnerships with health "exercise is medicine" – refer to recreation facilities and programs • Mental health • Need more health info
Partnerships & Relationships	• Build trusting relationships as a professional (within the sector and externally) • Need partnerships • Future collaboration for districts to work together to help rural communities
Social Needs	• Yes, the sector is positioned to deliver • More free play
Specialization	• Specialization – will occur, but private vs. public equals a two-tiered system
Technology	• Need to combine exercise with technology • Technology will be more embedded in our society • Embrace in a way that's positive • Virtual leisure • Screen based technology will not go away

Appendix C: What primary changes are needed to ensure the recreation sector can respond to changes in our community? How do we ensure that we remain relevant to our customers?

Table includes verbatim answers shared by conference participants in their groups.

Primary Changes & Remaining Relevant	Additional Comments
Telling our story, the right way	- Definition of recreation is so vast; it has encompassed so much in the last 25-50 years - Will it continue to change? - Removal of sites needs to happen; e.g. health, recreation, etc. - Recreation is the catalyst for all to succeed. - Continue to sell the benefits, essential services, rights vs. needs - Expanding our audience to other ministries/departments, like health, justice, etc. - Demanding and pushing our message with intent - Why are we here? Clarity of vision for recreation - Advocacy for community needs vs. "elite sport" emphasis - Data/statistics used to promote recreation - Help people shift - Recreation is an essential service and core infrastructure (growth in this understanding) 1987 recreation statement - Marketing - Awareness - We need to be recognised as an essential service – this needs to be priority
Policies & Greater Awareness	Government policies need to be addressed for inclusion of recreation as an essential right for all; leisure education needs to be available for all communities and levels
Customized/Individualized Programming	- Customer can actually pick programs that they like - More personalized programming for each community

	• Maintain low cost
	    ○ Recreation focus on enjoyment not for fame
	    ○ Keeps kids doing what they love

Sustainable Funding	• Flexible funding and resources generated from mutually beneficial partnerships • Funding will need to be secured through various organizations • Resources to respond to change
Engaging the minority of diverse population into the sector	• Education • Professional employment • Training • Decision making • Community understanding of their changing demographics • Diverse recruitment • Recruit professionals that represent the population
Being more culturally aware	• Becoming more educated • Inclusion; more diverse • Adapt to LGBTQ community • Reducing the stigma around it
Training & Research	• Training needs to reflect and educate values of recreation • Adapt the curriculum at high school and post secondary levels • Constantly doing research and adapting to our clients wants and needs • Changing the curriculum and the perspectives of other professions to be able to educate a range of different people about recreation • Knowledge translations – sharing knowledge between professions • More options for teaching programs
Broader Community Engagement	• Actual, whole community engagement • Listen – engagement • Do decision makers represent the demographics? • Be open to learning about those in your community

	• Use the framework as a benefit to engage and to create wholesome communities
	• Collecting engagement of our members/clients to make sure we are building what people need and not what we think they need
	• Engagement vs "consultation" or "tokenism"
	• Voice = hearing people
	• Work on facilitation skills
	    o Community assessment needs to improve
	    o Priority as leaders
	    o What are our changes/needs?
	• What the community wants and needs – true engagement
	• We need to know our customers – use demographic data/go to the park or playground

More Partnerships/Relationship Building	• More partnerships; additional collaborations with groups such as health/pharmaceuticals, mental illness, etc. • Strength of collaboration (sector partnerships, interdisciplinary) – being a leader in our communities • Key volunteers and influencers – becoming a champion/building a team • Knowledge translations – sharing knowledge between professions

Consideration for Recreation in Community Design	• The building environment/approach needs to change to allow for natural recreation
	• Address the needs of your customers
	• Needs of the population
	    o Sense of community, multiuse centers
	    o Easy accessibility to multipurpose spaces for families (kids swim, and mom can go to the gym down the hall)

Internal Collaboration & Skill Building	• We need more people with generalised skills so that we can have succession and cross connection between departments, not siloed
Responding to Technology Changes	• Technology – creative/video/virtual options in recreation • Virtual options for rural areas?

Recreation as a health solution	• Prescribe activity instead of medication
	    o Stay connected with physicians
	    o Using research to validate importance of recreation
	• Prescribe activity