Community Voices: Building a Foundation for the Future

Final Report

November 2012

Available at the RRFCSS website at rrfcss.webs.com or the SPHERU website at www.spheru.ca

November 2012

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Introduction

This report highlights findings from a community research project entitled *Community Voices: Building a Foundation for the Future*. The primary objective of the project was to identify the strengths and challenges of supports and services in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. The project resulted in an environmental scan, a toolkit outlining the project's methods, and this report which presents the key findings.

The *Community Voices* study utilized a community based research approach. Community based research recognizes the importance of collective decision-making, shared dialogue, local knowledge, and collaborative input throughout the research process. Members of the RRFCSS and local partners in Rosetown played an integral role in the development and implementation of the study.

Purpose

In 2007, the RRFCSS conducted a needs assessment for families with young children (J. Dolega, personal communication, June 14 2012). The needs assessment findings helped to further develop RRFCSS programming and services for young families. In moving forward, the RRFCSS wished to better support the needs of all residents in the community. The RRFCSS contacted SPHERU to conduct research on the community's needs. RRFCSS and SPHERU collaborated and developed the study's two main objectives:

1) To identify strengths and challenges of community supports and services in Rosetown;

2) To identify local solutions and prioritize future directions to support the continued growth of Rosetown.

What We Did

Research Framework

The project used qualitative research methods to collect detailed information about Rosetown's supports and services from a number of individuals in the community. This helped the project to specifically identify and thoroughly describe strengths and challenges of Rosetown's existing supports and services (Creswell, 2007; Solomon & Draine, 2010). Qualitative research methods also allowed the project to obtain in-depth understanding and insight about why these strengths and challenges existed (Cherry, 2000).

The study used qualitative and community based research approaches.

A community based research approach was utilized for the project which enabled shared decision making, equitable participation and mutual benefit for all community members and researchers in every aspect of the research (Israel et al., 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). The project's strength and innovation lied in the local involvement, perspectives and expertise of various people to create collective knowledge about strengths and challenges in Rosetown and to facilitate collective action and positive change.

What We Did

Research Methods

> **Various methods were used to obtain data. This included an environmental scan, interviews, focus groups, and a community dialogue.**

Prior to data collection, an environmental scan[1] was conducted to provide information on Rosetown's population and its existing supports. The environmental scan collected key data on community assets and resources (i.e., socio-demographics, housing, education, physical environment, services) using secondary data sources. The environmental scan provided a foundational understanding of Rosetown's strengths and areas needing continued growth.

In addition to the information collected from the environmental scan, three other methods were used to obtain information for the project: semi-structured interviews, focus groups and a community dialogue. The interviews were conducted in August 2012, and the focus groups were conducted from August to September, 2012. The aim of interviews and focus groups were to identify and understand the strengths and challenges of existing supports for Rosetown residents across all ages.

The interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participants were given the opportunity to review their transcripts before they were analyzed. The software package Atlas.ti6 (2011) was used to analyze the interview and focus group information for common themes.

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[1] An environmental scan was completed using census data and other existing data about Rosetown. This environmental scan is available on the RRFCSS website at: rrfcss.webs.com or the SPHERU website at: www.spheru.ca

What We Did

In October 2012, a community dialogue night was held to exchange insight and share study findings with the public (see Appendix A). This dialogue night was well advertised and was open to the public. Approximately 30 people attended. A local facilitator was employed for the dialogue night which aimed to encourage collective discussion among attendees to receive feedback on priority issues and prioritize future directions in Rosetown.

Recruitment and Participants

There were 29 participants in the project.

At the beginning of the study, a full team meeting was held to collectively develop parameters for selecting interview and focus group participants. In July 2012, a follow-up meeting was held to develop a list of potential participants and representatives from various community organizations, clubs, and services.

A total of 29 individuals – 20 females and 9 males – took part in the study. The median age of the participants was 56.5 years. Thirteen key informant interviews were conducted in-person with respondents who represented various services (informal and formal) and sectors (education, housing, health) and took approximately one hour to complete. A broad range of community-level perspectives (i.e., gender and age) were obtained from 16 general members of the public who took part in focus groups. Three focus groups were conducted with different respondents, and each session took approximately two hours to complete.

What We Heard: Interviews & Focus Groups

Key Groups Identified as Having Needs

Throughout the interviews and the focus groups, four groups were mentioned as having key challenges. These groups included: young families, teenagers, seniors, and people who were new to the community. Young families were parents who had young children from the ages of 0 to 12 years old. Teenagers referred to individuals who were 13 years old to 18 years old. Seniors were individuals who were near retirement or 65 years of age and older. Lastly, new people included individuals who had recently moved to the community. Although other groups of people were mentioned, they were not identified as having pressing needs.

Young families, teenagers, seniors, and people who were new to the community were identified as having needs.

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Common Themes Across All Groups

Lack of Information

- Little information on the programs and services available in the community.

- Difficult to access information about programs and services.

- Participants indicated that information directories often become outdated with incorrect phone numbers and contact people.

- Word of mouth was a main source of information, but the information was not necessarily accurate.

- Town Office was identified as a likely place to find information but was noted to have limited resources.

"A lot of times many different people don't realize some of the services are there and the reason they find out is because their neighbour or a friend happens to mention."

"[People] A lot of the time say, "Oh! I didn't know that was on" or, you know, I've missed things too that I didn't know were happening."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Need for Volunteers

- Community groups and organizations had difficulty recruiting new volunteers.

- People who currently volunteer are usually older in age, and volunteer for different organizations and clubs.

- Volunteer "burnout" was a common occurrence, and participants indicated a need to recruit new volunteers.

- Rosetown community clubs and groups consistently experienced difficulties in engaging new people to volunteer.

- Various volunteer recruitment strategies were used, such as posters and informational events, but these efforts did not always increase involvement.

"They're all in the same boat... they're all struggling, I think to keep membership and to attract younger membership."

"You can only do so much... as the population goes down, the work doesn't go away and so fewer people are doing the same amount or maybe more work ... pretty soon you just can't do it anymore."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Technology and Engagement

- Technology is changing the way people interact and communicate with each other.

- Participants viewed technology both negatively and positively. For instance, it could take away from face to face interaction but technology could also be used to inform people of events.

- Increased technology was identified as a reason for less community participation from younger generations.

"I think people are cocooning. I think TV has become regular part of people's lives. I really think that's an issue."

"I think that's going to be the biggest issue down the road is phones in school and phones and texting, driving and texting."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Sense of Security and Safety

- Rosetown was viewed as a safe place to live, and participants stated that crime was relatively low.

- Safety was identified as a strength for attracting people to the community.

- Sense of safety was described as changing with more new people in the community.

- Participants believed that Rosetown was a safer community in the past compared to now.

"What I think we've got … is level of security or feeling security."

"I never leave my house unlocked anymore but you used to. Probably 10 years ago we probably would."

"I like the kind of the freedom I have. I can go for a walk at any time of the day or evening, I don't worry about it. I feel comfortable and safe and I can walk anywhere I want."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Location

- Rosetown was identified as centrally located and close to the city which was described as ideal for many residents.

- Rosetown's proximity to Saskatoon was also viewed as a challenge for business owners who wished to retain local business.

"All the amenities that we need are here and we're close to Saskatoon if we have to go to specialists and type of things."

"...the downfall being so close to the city if you don't have something different then people just go to the city."

What We Heard: Interviews & Focus Groups

Limited Housing and Rental Housing

- Participants stated that adequate and affordable housing was difficult to obtain in Rosetown.

- Available houses on the market were often old and in need of major repairs while newer housing was hard to come by and costly.

- Availability of adequate rental housing was limited and in high demand in Rosetown.

- Participants stated that available rental housing was often old and in poor condition, which presented less than ideal conditions for tenants.

"If you don't have houses to live it doesn't matter if you have a hockey rink or if you have indoor pool or if you have those things, nobody is going to come here if they can't find a place to live."

"Houses are expensive in Rosetown, they're fairly pricey."

"Why would a person buy that old house, dilapidated old house, they're going to keep renting it till it falls down around the people?"

What We Heard: Interviews & Focus Groups

Need for More Industry and Employment

- Agriculture, health, and education were identified as the main industries and areas of employment in Rosetown.

- Respondents discussed the need for more industry as there were few opportunities for employment that were unrelated to these areas.

- New industry would help attract new people to Rosetown while boosting the local economy and commerce.

- Respondents identified Rosetown's future industry could potentially be the oil industry.

"[We need to] attract some big industry that would bring a lot of families into us."

"Problem areas, I think that the industry here is agriculture and we're locked into that and as agriculture grows, so grows the community to some extent, you know, as opposed to having some other industrial diversification like Kindersley with oil and gas."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Doctor Shortage

- Physician recruitment and retention were identified as a priority issues.

- Participants discussed the benefit of creating a "community run clinic" so that residents could have a voice in the services provided.

- Nurse practitioners were identified as a potential key service to relieve the doctor shortage.

"I would say we're good with everything, the only service that we struggle with I think, that I in my point in time is doctors. We seem to have an issue with doctors."

"...Hospital and doctors, we're short in doctors but we're trying to recruit more. I think that's a big thing is the doctors and health."

"It's interesting to be wielding a brand new addition on the hospital, which I'm totally in agreement with but you need some doctors and nurses to actually run it..."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Need for More Arts Based Programs

- Many sports related activities were identified as being available to residents in Rosetown.

- Respondents described a need for more arts based activities and programs.

"Recreational services in my opinion there's a very wide range of sports facilities for ... winter and summer."

"[Need to] get more activities planned that are not sport type activities."

"If you're not into sports, you're not into anything there's nothing for you."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Common Themes Among Young Families

- Safety in Rosetown was viewed as a good environment for young families.

- The library was identified as an asset in offering various activities for young families such as mom and tot group and a safe space for children to use computers.

- KidKare was viewed as a benefit for young families, but, more childcare spaces were needed.

- Various sports activities (hockey, skating, soccer and swimming) were available for children of young families.

"In a small town the younger kids even can get on their bicycles once they're able to ride them and they can ride them darn near, all over the town safely."

" I really feel like my kids are safe in this community that if I wasn't looking after them specifically, somebody else is also keeping an eye on them and making sure they're okay."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

- More arts based activities, such as band and theatre, were needed.

- Participants stated young families experienced challenges in terms of obtaining program information, cost and registration.

- Participants believed it could be difficult to meet other parents and families if the children were not involved in sports related activities.

"...with soccer there was a $50.00 late registration fee and I'm like I can't do that, I'm sorry but..."

"There's constantly people who are looking for people to babysit, so and there's not a whole lot of day homes in town either and again when there is, they're like a hot commodity and they fill up really fast too."

"Kidkare is a good thing... [it's] a good daycare in town."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Common Themes Among Teenagers

- A variety of sports activities were identified for teenagers, such as hockey, football, and other high school sports.

- Participants were concerned about sports being costly and how this could be a barrier for some teenagers.

- More arts based activities for teenagers, such as theatre and painting, are needed.

"I think that we have a lot of things for young people to do, like we have figure skating, we have hockey, we have bowling, there is the team sports at school."

"Some just aren't interested like there's lots of sports to the schools, just lots of sports but not every child is sports minded."

"I don't know what's out there for, they must be some other things playing on their iPads or they're texting all the time. I think that's going to be the biggest issue down the road is phones in school and phones and texting, driving and texting and so how do you fight that?"

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

- Kidsport was viewed an asset for teenagers because helped to offset costs associated with organized sports.

- Youth center was viewed as an asset because participation did not cost anything, and it offered summer activities.

- Participants felt teenagers' increased involvement in technological activities, such as ipods, video games and cell phones, results in less community, volunteer and extracurricular engagement.

"I'm really glad that there is something like the youth center. I'm not sure how often it's open, I don't feel, I don't think it's open, you know, as often as it would, as often as maybe it should be just because I believe it's run all by volunteers so of course there's a limit there."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Common Themes Among Seniors

- Rosetown was often described as a senior's community or a retirement community.

- Retirees were often attracted to Rosetown because of its safety and health services.

- Participants identified a gap in assisted living housing to allow seniors to age in the community and remain close to family.

- Transportation to Saskatoon for medical appointments was viewed as a challenge for seniors.

"One senior housing gap I think we have is assisted living. But we don't have anything like that and so many people comment on that because there's no transition, it's like so many people that move into those places can really stay there pretty much forever and let's say almost totally bedridden. So we don't have any facility that's really like in that category assisted living."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

- Senior's Centre provides various activities for older adults.

- Some participants described the seniors' centre as a place for "old" people, which meant that young seniors were less likely to utilize the centre.

- Isolation and loneliness were identified as challenges for seniors new to the community.

"Rosetown has a fairly big senior population actually, we probably draw from about 40 miles I would say."

"I'm a senior and I've never been there to take part in their activities but I'm not ready for that yet. I know a few seniors like that but it is very active."

"You're probably going to find the challenges greater for seniors group because of mobility issues and transportation issues I think."

What We Heard:
Interviews & Focus Groups

Common Themes Among New People

- Participants stated that affordable living and safety were key factors that attracted new people to Rosetown.

- People who were new to Rosetown were often former residents who were returning home to retire, raise their young families, or take over the family farm.

- Other new people often included retirees and seniors from neighboring communities.

"Rosetown has been known as a senior's town for quite a few years, but we have a lot of families moving to town now."

"I remember like a long time ago we'd walk down the street and we would know absolutely everyone, but you go down the street now and I don't know everybody anymore. Like it's happening, like there's always new people coming in and out."

"In the last few years, we've seen another generation of younger farmers either staying here or moving back to farm."

What We Heard: Interviews & Focus Groups

- Limited housing was viewed as a challenge for new people as there is little available to rent or buy.

- Accessing information about services and programs was difficult for new residents.

- Rosetown's sense of safety was described as changing with the presence of new people.

- Participants believed Rosetown is becoming more diverse as more new people move into the community.

"Moving here brand new it could be difficult to meet people if you don't belong to something or get into some or join some committees. It could be hard to meet people."

" I don't think there are a lot of houses on the market. For somebody moving in to town housing might be a bit of an issue, from time to time there are not many houses available. Right now I think there's a few but time to time that's certainly an issue."

What We Heard: Community Dialogue

Issues of Importance

- Lack of information and communication were identified as key issues by community dialogue participants.

- More effective and consistent communication methods are needed in relaying information about existing programs and services.

- Strategies should be created to welcome new residents to the community while familiarizing them to services and supports in Rosetown.

What We Heard:
Community Dialogue

Addressing Issues of Importance

- Develop an informal "hub" where information can be shared in multidirectional way, meaning information could come in but information could also come out of this "hub."

- An intergenerational centre could be created to provide information, activities and a common place to meet and interact.

- An electronic information directory could be developed and regularly updated.

- Social media, such as websites and facebook, could be used to share information.

- Information packages could be developed and placed in frequently accessed sites such as the town office, banks, grocery stores or distributed with the water and power sign up packages.

Discussion

The *Community Voices* project was developed to identify the strengths and challenges of community supports in Rosetown. Community members who participated and provided local insight helped to prioritize future directions for the growth of Rosetown.

Throughout the project, the participants consistently stated that it is important to be mindful of the needs of all residents in Rosetown. While some participants identified certain groups of people as having more pressing needs, participants agreed that residents should have their voices heard in order to move forward together as a community.

Growth of the community was a consistent theme arising from the findings. Participants identified the need for the community to grow. This meant growing in terms of commerce and business, attracting new people to town, creating housing, implementing and developing services or supports, and becoming more accepting of diversity in the community.

Communication was a key factor. In order to be able to address community concerns to realize the potential of Rosetown, participants believed that all residents needed to be fully informed of what happening in the community. They believed that this was a starting point for residents to be on the "same page" about issues or concerns within the community.

More importantly, participants believed that community members had the capacity to both motivate and support each other in times of need as demonstrated by past successes. This recognition points to participants' beliefs in Rosetown's potential as a vibrant and flourishing community which can be realized with the appropriate resources and support. Collaboration was highlighted as an important factor in achieving success and Rosetown residents have a proven track record in strong collaboration to achieve goals..

Next Steps

The RRFCSS has plans to make the study findings and the final report accessible to the general public on their web page. They have also partnered with the Town Office to ensure this report can be found through a link on the town's website. The RRFCSS encourages community stakeholders to contact them about using these findings for their own organizations.

Furthermore, the RRFCSS plans to utilize the study findings to guide development of their services and support to better meet the needs of the residents of Rosetown. The RRFCSS plans to meet as a group to discuss how they can utilize the community insight and recommendations arising from the study and how to put this knowledge into action to benefit local residents and the community as a whole.

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Appendix A

Community Voices: Building a Foundation for the Future

Presentation for the
Community Dialogue Night
October 30, 2012
Rosetown, SK

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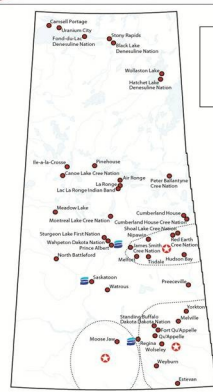❖ Rosetown Regional Family and
Community Support Services, Inc.
(RRFCSS)

Presentation Overview

- Brief Introduction to SPHERU
- Study Objectives
- Research Overview
- Findings
- Next Steps

SPHERU: Who are we?

- The Saskatchewan Population Health & Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU) is an interdisciplinary research unit committed to critical population health research.

- Collaboration between U of S and U of R with 10 researchers working out of 3 locations in the province: Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert.

- Funded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF) and other national and provincial project funding.

Saskatchewan Population Health
and Evaluation Research Unit (SPHERU)
**SASKATCHEWAN PROJECT SITES/REGIONS
2005-2011**

- SPHERU Research Site
- SPHERU Office
- SPHERU Study Region

Why are we here today?

- Exchange insight and share findings from the Community Voices study;

- Discuss whether these findings accurately reflect your experiences.

Study Objectives

1. To identify strengths and challenges of community supports and services in Rosetown;

2. To identify local solutions and prioritize future directions to support the continued growth of Rosetown.

Research Overview

- An environmental scan was conducted to examine population information and existing supports available in Rosetown;

- Interviews and focus groups were used as the research methods as they allow for in-depth discussion and enable participants to speak openly;

- 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted with service providers, volunteers, businesses and other community members;

- 3 focus groups were held with 16 community members.

Findings

Key Findings

- Four groups of people were identified as having key needs:

  1. Young families
  2. Teenagers
  3. Seniors
  4. New People

Key Findings- Common themes

1. Lack of information on existing programs.

2. Need for more volunteers to help run community programs, how do we engage others?

3. Sense of safety and security often discussed.

4. Proximity to city a strength in terms of accessing services, but creates challenges for local business.

5. Limited housing and rental housing market.

Young Families

- Sense of safety in community described as a strength for young families:

"I think there is a certain feeling of security here... I think, families feel like kids can go and do things."

Young Families

- Many respondents discussed Kid Kare as a strength for young families; however more daycare spaces were identified as necessary.

Young Families

- Reading program at library was identified as a strength.
- Lack of information on existing programs and registration dates.
- Swimming pool was considered a strength but more activities were needed.
- Need for more arts based activities.
- Difficult to meet other families if your kids are not in sports.

Teenagers

- Availability of sports such as hockey and swimming were identified as strengths.
- Need for less expensive activities especially during the summer months:

" We've got a bowling alley and the rink in the winter time, but for the kids that aren't into sports or the families can't afford sports."

Teenagers

- Technology was identified as a challenge to engaging youth in activities and volunteering:

"Lack of young people going into organizations is critical."

"I don't know what's out there for, there must be some other things playing on their iPads or they're texting all the time. I think that's going to be the biggest issue down the road is phones in school and phones and texting, driving and texting and so how do you fight that?"

Teenagers

- Need described for more activities, especially arts :

" For the most part good. I mean it's always difficult to find enough activities for youth. The high school has very active sports program, um, the hockey program; figure skating are all very good. Swimming pool is good. We lack a theatre which most small communities do."

"They should promote ... some more music, what they have over there. Used to be bands and stuff ..."

Seniors

- Seniors' housing was identified as both a strength and a challenge.
- Existing housing works well but need for more housing, especially assisted living facilities within the community and close to services.
- Transportation gap, especially for medical appointments to the city.
- While the seniors' centre provides activities, respondents often made reference to the need for more options.

Seniors

- Rosetown was often described as a retirement community with seniors moving to the area:

  "We have a lot of people moving from Alberta. But as far as seniors, we seem to have more seniors coming than young families."

- Participants felt that it may be difficult for "outsider" seniors to engage in the community.

New People

- Difficult for new people to access information about programs and services available.

- Previous welcome wagon program was noted as being effective and necessary.

- Often described as homogenous community which creates implications for acceptance.

- Sense of safety in community described to be changing as more new people come to Rosetown.

Next Steps

- Dialogue Night group work will provide key guidance and insight in prioritizing next steps;

- A full report containing the feedback from the Dialogue Night and the comprehensive study's findings will be available on the RRFCSS website in December 2012.

Team Members

- Research Team Members
  - Dr. Bonnie Jeffery, SPHERU, University of Regina
  - Carolyn Tran, Master of Social Work Student, University of Regina
  - Juanita Bacsu, SPHERU, University of Saskatchewan
- RRFCSS Team Members
  - Jadwiga Dolega
  - Crystal Storey
  - Bob White
  - Angela Malcolm
- Community Partners
  - Hugh Lees
  - Mayor, Brian Gerow