

The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program: Final Evaluation Report



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Erin Kraft, PhD(c) & Diane M. Culver, PhD



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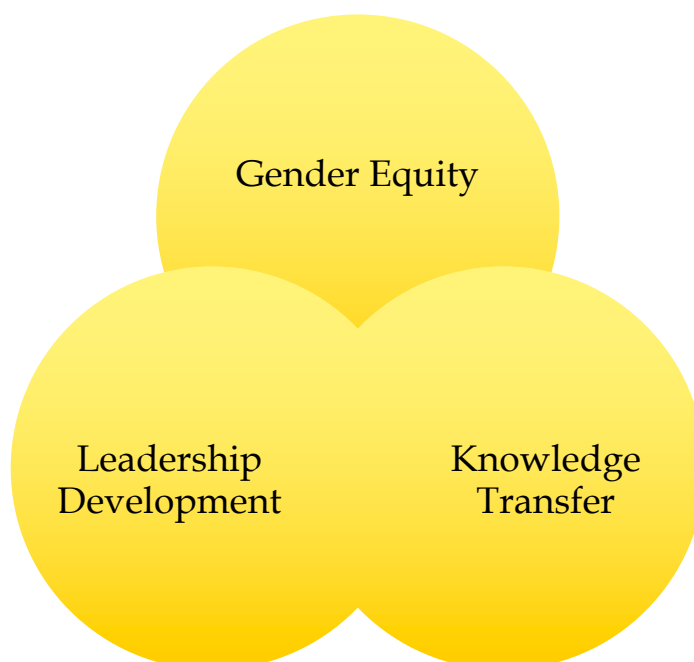
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Background

The Government of Canada (GC) has committed to delegating strategic investments across the Canadian sport system. One such investment is to fund projects that provide opportunities for women and girls to participate in sport; these roles include athletes, coaches, and leaders (Canadian Heritage, 2019a). Moreover, the GC's *Working Group on Gender Equity and Sport* recently recommended that initiatives be implemented to increase the number of women coaches (Canadian Heritage, 2019b). Thus, initiatives are needed to support this recommendation and the GC in reaching their target of achieving gender equality in sport at every level by 2035.

Over the past few decades, Canada has played an important role in supporting women across sport systems through policy developments (Thibault, & Harvey, 2013). There have also been notable increases in female participation in some levels of sport, such as high performance. However, women in coaching and leadership roles remain underrepresented (Demers, Thibault, Brière, & Culver, 2019). To address these disparities in both research and on-the-ground initiatives, a social learning initiative was planned and implemented. The Alberta Women in Sport Leadership Impact Program (AWiSL) aimed to increase gender equity, leadership diversity, and transfer knowledge at all levels of sport in Alberta. The following section describes this collaborative initiative between the Coaching Association of Canada, Alberta Sport Connection, and the University of Ottawa.

Program Outcomes



Executive Summary

Upon receiving funding from a sector of the federal government, Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) Canada, to implement an initiative to support women and gender equity in sport, the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) partnered with the Province of Alberta as a designated region to carry out this two-and-a-half-year project. Alberta was selected as the province for this initiative because they had the capacity to support the program; and it was thought the program would benefit their organizations and enhance the work they were already doing. The AWiSL had three main outcomes: to increase gender equity, leadership diversity, and knowledge transfer across the province. This would be achieved through a social learning initiative (to be discussed below) in collaboration with sport organizations across Alberta. Sport organizations were invited to apply online through the Province's Multi Sport Organization (Alberta Sport Connection; ASC) by submitting a project plan to increase gender equity and leadership diversity in their own sport organizations. Twelve sport leaders and their organizations were accepted to be a part of this initiative. The sport leaders all held an administrative position at a sport organization, with positions ranging from coaching development coordinator, to executive director. The types of organizations varied from regional sport organizations, to multisport organizations, to sport clubs. The successful applications/organizations and their projects are as listed in Table 1. In addition, to the sport leaders, this initiative included six mentors who were recruited to assist with the facilitation of the program and to support the sport leaders in achieving their project goals. These mentors were chosen for their backgrounds and leadership experiences across sport. One of the mentors, Isabelle Cayer from the CAC, was the project lead for the initiative. The six mentors are as listed in Table 2.

This group of 12 sport leaders and six mentors met approximately once a month (in-person or online) to participate in activities to support them in achieving their project goals and building their own leadership capacities. For a more in-depth description of the AWiSL activities, see Appendices A and B. It is also important to note that initially 15 sport leaders were accepted to be a part of the AWiSL but three had to end their participation early for various reasons including changes in work locations or positions.

The results of the final evaluation demonstrated increases in all three of the program outcomes and showed several different types of value created through this social learning initiative. Gender equity increases included: the number of girls participating in sport programs, the number of women registered to all-female sports teams, and the number of women-only professional development opportunities. Leadership diversity/development changes included: improved confidence, improved leadership skills, increased awareness of leadership capacity and influence, and increased leadership opportunities. In terms of knowledge transfer, developments have included: publications in academic and practical journals, presentations at conferences and other professional meetings, the development of a how-to model for social learning initiatives, and increases in collaborations and relationships between sport organizations across the province. Finally, there were eight types of value created, which will be discussed throughout this evaluation. In addition to these

increases/changes, the researchers also provide examples of challenges and barriers experienced by the sport leaders and mentors. The following section introduces the social learning concept that underpins the AWiSL initiative.



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



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Table 1.

Sport Leader/Organization	Project
Jessica Ferguson, The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement, University of Alberta	Women/ girls access to physical activity due to disability
Jennifer Cliff, Alberta Alpine Ski Association	Female coach mentorship
Lori Brough, Wapiti Nordic Bike Club	Female leadership/coaches for mountain bike program
Laura Filipow, Spirit North	Female leadership in First Nations communities through sport/cross-country skiing
Kendall Newell, Hockey Alberta	Female coach mentorship
Jasen Pratt, Karate Alberta	Female coach certification
Bronwen Harvey, Ringette Alberta	Female head coaches
Ella Mayer, InMotion Network	Participation of New Canadian girls/ women in sport, culturally competent coaches
Trina Radcliffe, Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference	Female coach mentorship in college
Lisa Grant, Alberta Lacrosse Association	Female coach development
Carmen Charron, Alberta Soccer Association	Female leadership, Officials/Coach Developers
Chandra Crawford, Fast & Female	Reach on impact of F&F programs

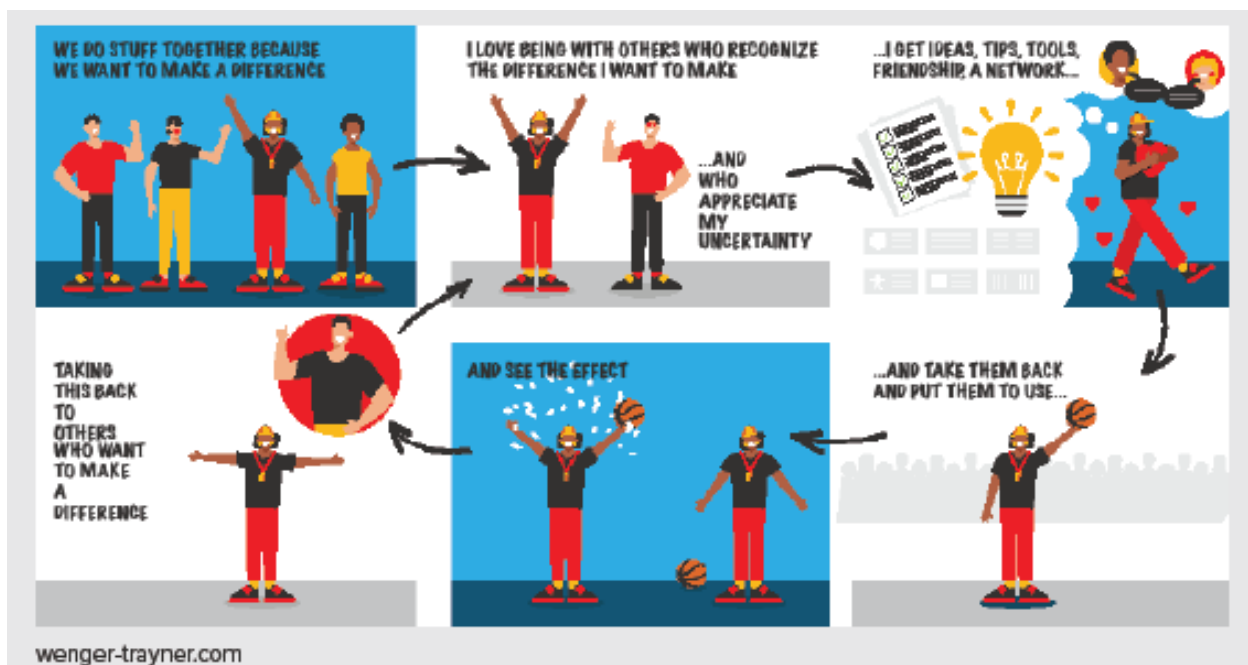
Table 2.

Mentor	Organization
Adam Sollitt,	Coaching Association of Canada, Coaching Consultant
Isabelle Cayer (project lead)	Coaching Association of Canada, Senior Coaching Consultant, Women in Coaching
Cari Din, PhD	University of Calgary Faculty of Kinesiology, CSI Calgary
Shawnee Harle	Winning Matters
Jackie Tittley	Coaching Association of Canada, Coaching Consultant
Melody Davidson	Hockey Canada

Summary of Social Learning Theory

In 1991, Lave and Wenger published the book *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation* in which learning was seen as being part of a social community with an apprenticeship model where newcomers are given the legitimacy to join a community and gradually develop their practice overtime to become full members of the community. Examples of such communities included midwives and tailors. The theorists considered this phase of social learning to be the first of their continuously evolving theory. In 1998, Wenger expounded on the second phase with his book titled *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. This second iteration centred in much more detail on the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP), which in the focus is on collaborative meaning making and negotiating knowledge as a collective group. CoPs are glued together by three main tenants: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire; and are populated by groups of people with a shared passion or set of problems.

The CoP concept has resonated across many fields including education (Killeavy & Moloney, 2010; Yang, 2009) and coaching (e.g., Bertram & Gilbert, 2011; Culver & Trudel, 2008; Stoszowski & Collins, 2017). Considering the AWiSL was created with a group of collaborative individuals who shared a passion to change sport across the province, cultivating a CoP was a fitting initiative. For additional information regarding the underpinnings of this theory and implications in coaching and sport, see Appendix C. The figure below portrays the experience of a CoP member.

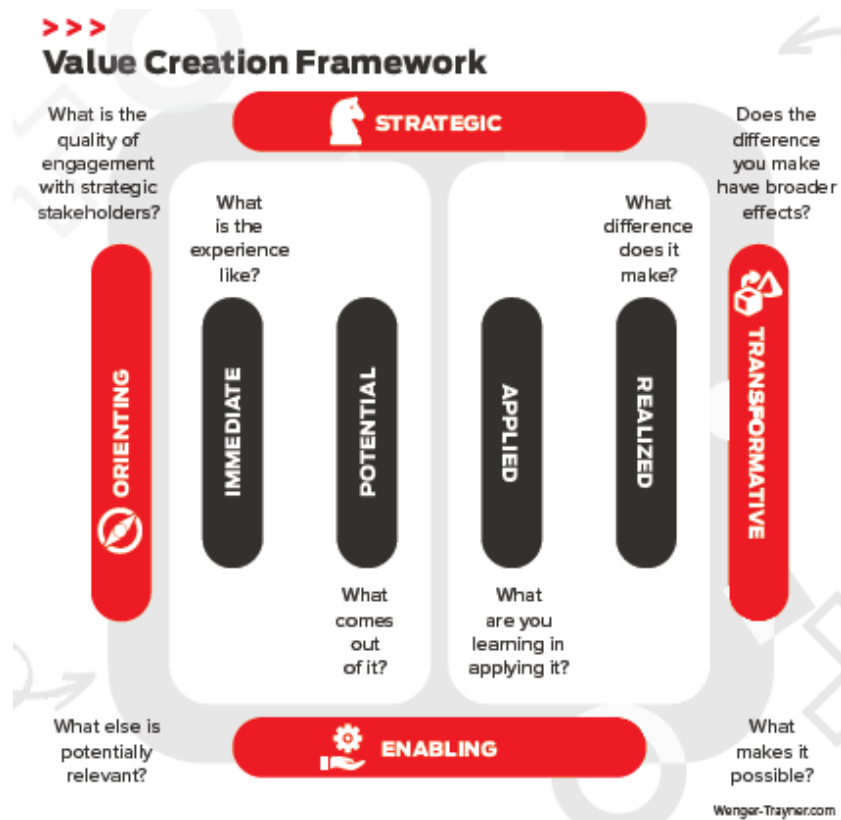


Evaluation and Methods

In 2018, the AWiSL project lead (Isabelle Cayer) collaborated with PhD candidate, Erin Kraft, and Associate Professor, Dr. Diane M. Culver from the University of Ottawa to develop a program evaluation of this initiative. The main results of this report are the findings of a longitudinal (1.5 years) evaluation with a focus on the three project outcomes: gender equity, leadership diversity, and knowledge transfer. Considering social learning theory is the area of expertise of these researchers, they also assessed the perceived value of the social learning intervention using Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat's (2011) *Value Creation Framework*.

The Value Creation Framework (VCF; see figure below) was developed as a tool to assess and promote the value created through participation in a CoP. More specifically, Wenger et al. (2011) created narrative templates, for researchers to collect community members' stories of their experiences in the CoP. The perceived value of the stories is then assessed through five value cycles: immediate, potential, applied, realized, and transformative value. Wenger and Colleagues (2011) suggested the use of this framework in an effort to identify value that may be challenging to capture during social learning:

As human experiences that evolve over time, communities and networks have stories - how they started, what has happened since, what participants are trying to achieve. It is in the context of these narratives that one can appreciate what learning is taking place (or not) and what value is created (or not) (p.15).



Thus, the researchers found it important to collect the sport leaders', mentors', and others' stories overtime to capture these narratives and create a picture of the value created through a variety of perspectives and experiences.

Wenger-Trayner, Wenger-Trayner, Cameron, Eryigit-Madzwamuse, and Hart (2017) revealed two additional cycles: strategic value and enabling value. These cycles consider the value of stakeholder involvement in CoPs. They account for strategic conversations with and supports from stakeholders, which often result in enabling value. Enabling value, in turn, can contribute value to the CoP in other cycles. For additional information regarding the VCF see Appendix D.

Data Collection

Upon receiving ethical approval from the University of Ottawa's Research and Ethics Board mid-2018, the researchers began developing a data collection plan (see Appendix E for a detailed plan of data collection points). The following data collection tools were utilized at various points over the 1.5-year period (for examples of data collection tools, see Appendix F):

- Interviews
- Observations
- Surveys
- Informal discussions
- Organizational data

At times data were collected face-to-face during in-person meetings, whereas other modes of data collection were conducted virtually (e.g., Zoom, and survey money). In terms of the participants in this evaluation, data were collected from the following:

- 12 sport leaders
- 6 mentors
- Participants from the sport leader's projects
- Individuals from the sport leader's organizations

All the participants completed and signed a consent form prior to their engagement in this evaluation and were made aware that they could choose to end their participation at any time without consequence.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed iteratively throughout data collection using Braun, Clarke and Weate's (2016) process of thematic analysis. In total, the researchers had 728 pages of data (including interview transcriptions, observation data, surveys, etc.) that were either transcribed verbatim or using NVivo transcription software. In addition, each sport leader completed a final evaluation form to provide the researchers with a high-level outline of their project goals and subsequent achievements (or challenges) to

supplement the other forms of data. To access these project evaluations, see Appendix G. Following data collection, data were uploaded into NVivo analysis software to assist with the analytical process. This process consists of phases 1-2: familiarization and coding; phases 3-5: theme development, refinement, and naming; and phase 6: write up. The next section provides the results of the evaluation and addresses gender equity, leadership diversity, knowledge transfer, value created, and challenges/barriers.

Results



Leadership Diversity/ Development



Leadership Diversity/Development

The next section will present the following participant groups and discussion points.

Participant Group	Discussion Points
Sport Leaders	- Support for developing confidence - Improved leadership skills - Self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence - Increased leadership opportunities - Men supporting women in leadership development
Sport Organizations	- A selection of quotes from sport organization staff discussing the leadership development seen in the sport leaders
Mentors	- Learning from others - Having a strong and adaptable project lead - Engaging in and embracing uncertainty

Sport Leaders

As mentioned above, there is an imbalance in the number of women securing leadership positions across sport and in some cases, women in these roles are declining (Acosta & Carpenter, 2019). Women may experience discriminatory treatment in accessing resources (Greenhaus, Parasurman, & Wormley, 1990), along with many other barriers (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012), which may limit their entrée to leadership opportunities (Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). Moreover, men are often in “gatekeeper” positions in sport and are more inclined to give leadership opportunities to other men (Taylor & Hardin, 2016). A focus of the AWiSL was to support the sport leaders in their access to leadership development opportunities that may not otherwise have been available. The sport leaders spoke to specific leadership development themes including support for developing their confidence; improved leadership skills; self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence; increased leadership opportunities; and men supporting women in leadership development. To access a publication written specifically to discuss these themes, see Appendix H. The following section provides a selection of quotes from the sport leaders stories to demonstrate their leadership development through their participation in the AWiSL program.

Support for developing confidence

Sport Leader 1:

“I definitely would say I have more confidence now. I think we had a lot of opportunities to stand up in front of a group of people and talk about something that we were passionate about, in a lot of different formats. Lots of those were formally prepared, lots of them were informal. So, I have a lot more confidence maybe kind of speaking like my truth or what’s important to me. That’s another thing I think I really took away [from the CoP]... the thing about our presentations and our slides, and not having a lot of words, and how when you stand up there you should just be talking from your heart or talk about what’s important to you. And I think even outside of just presenting, I can take that to my every day when I’m in meetings, or when I’m in different groups just talking about what I know or what I believe in more confidently.”

Sport Leader 2:

“I definitely have prospered, the confidence I guess is the big one knowing that the social aspect for me, it’s confidence. And I’m quite an introvert, so to be put into that position where I have to socialize, and I have to do that, it’s been very beneficial in that sense. It’s forced me to get out of the shell a bit.”

Improved leadership skills

Sport Leader 3:

“I’ve definitely developed on the communication side; again just like always being reminded how important communication is and the way you communicate, and different people will respond in different ways. And communication, I know I’ve kind of always considered a strength of mine and relationship building, but at the same time I feel like I’ve developed more of a professionalism over the last two years. And knowing, like I used to get offended really easily and now I’ll sit back and listen and be like, ‘OK is this really something to be offended about? Or respond to? Or do I just kind of let this one go?’”

This same sport leader then had the opportunity to apply some of her new skills developed through the CoP in her practice. She continued:

“Yeah, we actually just recently, like just before our last meeting took place, my supervisor was let go and I was then assuming the role of the head of our [sport] department. So, there were a lot of pieces in there about communication, and leadership, and organization that I had to put into practice right away.”

Sport Leader 4:

“Just in everyday interactions with our team. I think the biggest thing is, it has made me more comfortable in my authentic leadership style, which is huge... because I am communicating

better with the team, upwards and downwards like all the way around, three-sixty. Yeah, we are more effective as a team. And personally, yes because it makes me feel more confident and comfortable in who I am.”

Self-awareness of leadership capacity and influence

Sport Leader 5:

“Because I was a female leader heading [her project], I think my role inspired other women. I actually heard that from a lot from other women. I even heard it from mothers who I would see [participating in the sport] because we encourage parents to come because we need additional people to be at the end of the group; so we try to have a very inclusive program. And so, I noticed that a mom would say ‘You’re the one that inspired me to get into biking, like I haven’t ridden since I was young’. So, I think I never really thought of myself as a leader; I knew I was beginning a group, but I thought of it more as an organizer type of a leader. I didn’t know that I was a female leader that people looked up to.”

Sport Leader 6:

“Well I think one thing that I’ve learned from [the AWiSL mentors] for sure is really being self-aware and thinking about, you know, ‘Why am I feeling like this and why am I reacting like this? How do I want to react to this? How am I going to be the most effective kind of leader in this situation?’ So, I think those very specific practical tools.... ‘Why am I feeling like this?’ You know, ‘How can I adjust and head in a better direction?’ So yeah, I think just sort of practical everyday kind of tools and thought processes to put into place. I think has made me more effective in my role.”

Increased leadership opportunities

Sport Leader 3:

“I mean being part of this Community of Practice, my first year in this role I was standing in front of our entire group of Athletic Directors, and board and executives, presenting on the importance of developing female coaches in all of our sport. And without this Community of Practice, I would not have been in a position to do that. I would have just been a body sitting around the table raising my hand to vote every once in a while.”

Sport Leader 7:

“So, my role evolved with the organization. You know at first... it was like, I kind of had a hand in it. And then [the CEO] was like, ‘You know what, I don’t think I can own this. I need you to own this with [BB] supporting’. So, I think for both [BB] and me, we were able to then dive into our academic backgrounds, our previous and current experiences of being in school and being able to talk to researchers. You know it was just something that wouldn’t have happened otherwise or at least not within this timeline.”

Men supporting women in leadership development

Sport Leader 8:

“I’m the head coach of the Ontario women’s team right now... We are actually running a bunch of women’s projects this week... There’s a bunch of women’s leadership projects going on.... And it’s amazing having moved across the country, sort of from the Alberta Sport Women and Leadership Program, in the challenges that we’re facing and trying to address with the projects out there; and listening to some of the challenges out here that our organization is hearing and trying to plan out the projects this week; they are so similar.”

Sport Leader 9:

“We were able to push to the point where we now have these two women as certified learning facilitators and are now going to be able to go in and deliver a course which we’ve not been in a position to do before. So, for us it has helped push that agenda forward. By putting these two women in a role where they will now have influence over this generation, that’s next. You know, for example, generations of coaches coming in by virtue of the fact that we have them certified and their going to go deliver that course; and it was all really through the support and the interest behind... it was from this program itself.”

Sport Organizations

In addition to the sport leader's perceptions of their leadership development through being a part of the AWiSL, individuals from their sport organizations had specific quotes to mirror the changes seen in the sport leaders. Below is a selection of quotes from "others" who work with the sport leaders in their organizations.

Sport Organization 1:

"CC has excellent skills as a leader. She is able to encourage and promote both women and men in our organization. What I have noticed is the increase in CC's confidence both in dealing with leaders and participants, as well as dealing with organizational issues... I believe the AWiSL program has provided CC a range of skills to move forward with her own growth and the confidence to provide mentorship to members of our club."

Sport Organization 2:

"Throughout the duration of this program DD was provided the opportunity to hire new staff and add the supervision of employees to her portfolio. Since that time, DD has been leading staff as well as a group of 10-15 volunteers on a day to day basis. She has a better understanding of her influence within the Female game and the organization, and has used her acquired skills and knowledge to positively impact female [participants]."

Sport Organization 3:

"EE has improved her presentation and public skills. She has become an asset to [the organization] when it comes to partnership development...I'm guessing some of that can be attributed to the leadership skills that she learned through this program!...Seeing EE grow in terms of her confidence to deliver presentations has had a really positive impact on our organization and I think this is a key aspect of sport leadership. You need to be able to

communicate your ideas to others (and not just those that you know and are familiar with). We are really proud of EE and the work she has done through the AWiSL project! Thank you!”

Mentors

Another example of leadership development was seen in the mentors facilitating the AWiSL. Considering that facilitation is an essential role in the sustainment of CoPs (Culver, Kraft, & Duarte, 2020; Bertram et al., 2017), it was important that the project lead and mentors actively advance their leadership capabilities to support the AWiSL. The project lead and mentors (in this section referred to as ‘social learning leaders’ or ‘SLLs’ when referenced as a group) collaboratively took on facilitation roles throughout the 2.5-year program. For example, Isabelle facilitated many of the whole group development opportunities for the entire CoP, whereas large group activities were facilitated by one or other of the mentors. The mentors also led ‘pods’ where each mentor was grouped with approximately three sport leaders, so that they could support the sport leaders in achieving their projects goals in a small group or on-on-one setting.

To support the leadership growth of the SLLs, they initially participated in a training session with the Wenger-Trayners (the CoP theorists) to develop their social learning leadership capabilities. In addition, they met approximately once a month to engage in discussions, share ideas, and problem solve issues pertaining to their pods or the greater CoP. These constant interactions enabled them to grow and learn from each other while navigating their leadership roles. The SLLs spoke to specific social learning leadership themes including learning from others; having a strong and adaptable project lead; and engaging with and embracing uncertainty. To access a manuscript written specifically to discuss the SLLs development, see Appendix I. The following paragraph provides a selection of quotes from the SLLs stories to demonstrate their social learning leadership development through their facilitation of the AWiSL program.

Learning from others

Mentor 1:

“I will say that my greatest education has been in observing. The way everyone is trying to make this work for themselves; and observing really different perspectives and different ways of being, especially in relation to leadership and especially into how to navigate responsibility.”

Mentor 2:

“I think it [learning from the other SLLs] just reinforced how I wanted to engage with the [sport leaders] and more so was around troubleshooting... I mean [two of the mentors] are two completely different leaders, like FF is really action energy, GG is reflective... makes you think.

You know I think at times, more GG makes me think about what I'm doing in my own life and in this project, and FF keeps you motivated if you're on the right track."

Having a strong and adaptable project lead

Mentor 1:

"Honestly, if somebody in the mentor team had said 'Hey Isabelle could you do this for us mentors.' She would have done it right... gee I can't understate how good it's been to have someone at the helm who is open to every idea; people say something and she'll go 'oh yeah let's look into that'... people have to realize that the one who is cutting the cheque has to have a very, very strong level of confidence and ability to listen to all the ideas, and she does."

Mentor 2:

"I think we had everything we needed. Isabelle was always available. There was always like creativity around whether we did webinars or sessions, the calls we had with the other leaders, you know were always productive; lots of great ideas there."

Engaging in and embracing uncertainty

Mentor 1:

"It takes much more patience, right? And comfort with a mess [facilitating]. I think it takes a lot of comfort with everyone moving in a different way, at a different speed than you do... You do have to let people come and go and it's not the same as a weekend course; but yeah, [the sport leaders] have to discover through experience and their own learning, and I think most of us weren't socialized to lead that way."

She continued:

“It can be difficult to know what your impact is when you do this kind of leadership and so it’s important to be comfortable paying attention to the subjective and serendipitous, that we can’t measure with a number, because I think that’s where the really meaningful stuff has happened for me.”

Mentor 3:

“After you get the self-awareness, the self-acceptance is there. Just because I rock doesn’t mean I’m going to get every horse to drink, right? And I’m okay with that, which is real growth. That’s good for me because I’m a perfectionist... I don’t think it’s changed what I do. I think it’s just helped me do it better because it’s giving me a deeper understanding of... ‘what do I need, what do I need from people around me in order to feel valued?’ ... all I can do is bring myself to the table every day.”

Gender Equity



Gender Equity

The next section will present the following themes and discussion points.

Themes	Discussion Points
Sport Leader Projects	- Sport organization gender equity advances
Organizational Buy-In and Long-Term Investments	- Organizational commitments and investments for the sport leaders' projects
Participant Testimonies	- A selection of participants quotes discussing their experiences participating in the sport leaders' projects
Male Perspectives	- A selected male participant perspective discussing his experience with the sport leaders' project
Sport Leader Perspectives	- A selection of sport leaders quotes discussing their experiences developing and implementing their gender equity focused projects

Sport Leader Projects

In mid-2018 the CAC conducted a needs assessment (see Appendix J for results) with the sport leader's organizations. Only 36.4% of the organizations referenced women and girls in their strategic or annual plans; and 4.8% had written goals, targets, or requirements in policies or bylaws for women on the Board. Over the past 2.5 years these sport organizations have reached over 790 (based on the sport leader's final evaluations, see Appendix G) women, girls, and other marginalized populations through their projects. This has been achieved through program and policy development, mentorship programs, and research projects. Although it is challenging to provide exact numbers pertaining to impact of every project as many of the sport leader's projects are still ongoing, Table 3 below represents the projects implemented by the 12 sport leaders through the AWiSL and their preliminary results.

Table 3.

Sport Organization	Gender Equity Advances
The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement	- Through an interview with 10 women, Jessica studied parasport inclusion from the perspective of women experiencing disability. This resulted in the production of a paper (to be submitted for publication) to highlight the two primary study themes: (1) within (para)sport and (2) beyond (para)sport. These two themes broadly captured participants' perspectives across a continuum of inclusion to exclusion in sport.
Alberta Alpine Ski Association	- Speed Sisters brought together U14 girls across the province, for a mentorship weekend lead by women alumni of the Alberta Ski Team and Canadian Ski Team. Over two years, the number of athletes increased from 40 to over 100. - SheCanCoach consisted of five mentor coaches who facilitated group learning sessions for younger women coaches.
Wapiti Nordic Bike Club	- Four mentors and mentees have participated in a mentorship program for women - The number of female participants have increased three programs

	- Increase in the number of women instructors or assistant instructors - A Female Let's Ride Facilitator has been trained for certification
Spirit North	- Increased the number of Indigenous youth participating in cross-country ski programs (in-school and after-school) by over 100 participants.
Hockey Alberta	- Increase in female coaches for the following: women registered to female teams, and achieving higher level certifications - Introduction to coaching clinic developed for mothers with children playing hockey - Developed a female apprentice coach program
Karate Alberta	- Increase from one to four learning facilitators in the province – two of whom are women.
Ringette Alberta	- Increase in female coaches - Five mentors and mentees have participated in a mentorship program for women
InMotion Network	- Developed programming for New Canadian and Indigenous girls - Provided coach development workshops for women
Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference	- Implemented a mentorship program for women coaches - Mentees continued coaching with their respective teams the following season
Alberta Lacrosse Association	- Five women-only clinics have been run for coaches and attended by 87 women - Now streaming girl's lacrosse games
Alberta Soccer Association	- Implemented a training program to train and certify 10 women coach developers - Implemented four women-only referee training programs attended by 161 women
Fast & Female (F&F)	- F&F are working with researchers to examine programme data and current curriculum to inform future curriculum development for events and programming for girls. They have developed key findings and recommendations to implement into their programming.

Organizational Buy-in and Long-term Investments

It is evident that over the past 2.5 years, the sport leader's projects have left an impact on the Alberta sport system. Another important piece that came through the data was the long-term commitments and investments seen by the sport leader's home organizations to support these projects beyond the scope of the AWiSL program. Initially, each sport leader was provided with a one-time installment of \$3000 to support the implementation of their projects. Since receiving this initial support, the sport organizations have committed to allocating resources to these projects to sustain them long-term. In some cases, this is a financial investment, while in other cases this investment is seen through policy changes and access to resources. What they do have in common, is the implication of the organizations seeing the value of the sport leader's projects and the importance of maintaining them long-term. Table 4. Provides examples of these commitments.

Table 4.

Organization	Long-Term Commitment
Alberta Alpine Ski Association - Financial investment	Speed Sisters is now supported by Alberta Alpines Legends Club (philanthropic group) to continue annually hosting the program
Hockey Alberta - Policy change	In 2019-2020 it was recommended that registered female hockey teams have a female coach. In 2020-2021 this will become a requirement
Lacrosse Alberta - Policy change	As of 2017 at least one female coach must be registered to all female teams
Soccer Alberta - Changes in regular programming	Create your advantage (referee training program) has now been embedded into the Alberta Soccer Referee program

Participant Testimonies

In addition to seeing the actual changes that have occurred across Alberta sport (i.e., project implementation and organizational commitments), accounts were collected from individuals who participated in these projects to illustrate some of the less tangible impacts of this initiative. The following is a selection of quotes from participants who were impacted by the 12 sport leader's projects. To access a publication specifically written about one of the 12 projects, see Appendix K.

ACAC Apprenticeship Program

“With the help of the Female Apprenticeship program and the [organization] coaching staff, I was able to gain such a vast array of knowledge and experiences far sooner than I would have ever thought I could. This program and the coaches gave me the confidence in my coaching ability and showed so much trust in me that I can't imagine a day when I'm done coaching anytime soon. I look forward to being back on the [organization] Coaching Staff for the upcoming 2019-2020 season!”

Alberta Soccer Create Your Advantage

“I enjoyed the program as it gives us a freedom of speech zone without judgement. That we are able to empower women referees no matter age or skill. I would attend the event again!”

“It was a welcoming experience being with all females, felt comfortable to ask, even for common plays, to clarify calls. Really good day.”

Alberta Soccer Coach Developer Program

“To me a big part of it is the connections that I’ve made with some of the other participants in the group. So just having different people to bounce different ideas off of when you’re maybe struggling with something. It’s given me other options to look to for help.”

And, from another participant:

“I think the program helped a lot... maybe it gave me more confidence to keep pushing through things that maybe normally I would have given up on.”

Spirit North Cross-County Program

“I was that kid that didn’t want to ski because if it did it wrong or if I fell, then I was scared of the other kids making fun of me. But now, I’m a ski leader here... feels great, it just makes you feel happy.”

Male Perspectives

With the focus of the AWiSL centred on gender equity and leadership diversity, the role of male allies played an important part in the success of this initiative. As mentioned previously, men often hold “gatekeeper” positions in sport (Taylor & Hardin, 2016) and make important decisions when it comes to promoting gender equity in sport. The following section provides a quote from a male participant who played a facilitation role in one of the women-only development projects. His testimony illuminates some of the impacts this program has had in terms of raising awareness of gender inequities in sport.

Male Participant

“I learned during the first weekend that there’s not enough instances of sponsorship for women where there are individuals that have the capacity to open doors, that are prepared to open the doors and get out of the way. And so, I’m a believer in equality of opportunity and if we don’t create and ensure that there’s sufficient opportunities for women to get similar types of training, to get similar types of opportunities as men might get, and to get the, you know, the necessary supports to help them along that pathway, we don’t have any hope of having an increase in leaders who are women, in my opinion.”

Sport Leader Perspectives

This final section focuses on the sport leader's experiences participating in an initiative that supports the movement towards gender equity across the province. The sport leader's quotes show their newfound sense of empowerment to create the changes they wanted to see and the impacts that this initiative has on their organizations and daily jobs.

Sport Leader 6:

"You know, to feel like you're being part of something that's actually going to make things better for women and girls is it's a good feeling. So, it's nice coming to work, sort of giving me a little spark."

Sport Leader 10:

"Well, I think it's just, getting the momentum and that we are putting emphasis on women in sport and leadership roles and once we get the momentum going then it will just keep growing. We're showing our membership that it's a priority."

Sport Leader 5:

"So, I'm a [sport A] coach but an opportunity came up for me to coach a [sport B] group, they were short [sport B] coaches and just from the amount of leadership that I've gotten through the Alberta Women in Sport Leadership...one of the topics that we talked about was how men will often times volunteer to do something even though they don't have all of the knowledge because women typically don't until they have majority of the knowledge. And so, I was in that situation where I felt like, well 'I really am no expert in [sport B], I'm not sure that I should be coaching' but then I remembered that information that was provided and thought 'Oh! I'm doing what all women do' and so I totally went for it."

Knowledge Transfer



Knowledge Transfer

Further to increasing gender equity and leadership diversity across the province, the third key outcome of this project was to enable and support knowledge transfer opportunities. The project lead was deliberate in facilitating these opportunities both within and beyond the AWiSL. Examples of this knowledge transfer included setting up presentations to disseminate knowledge from the AWiSL to the greater sport community, writing and publishing scholarly papers, developing a how-to model for other organizations wishing to implement a similar social learning initiative, and enabling the sport leaders and mentors to engage in knowledge transfer between each other to support the sport leaders in achieving their project goals and developing as leaders. The following section provides an overview of these knowledge transfer opportunity.

The next section will present the following themes and discussion points.

Themes	Discussion Points
How-to Model	- Introduces a how-to model and accompanying step-by-step guide for developing and sustaining CoPs
Presentations and Posters	- A list of presentations and posters from this program
Publications	- A list of publications and manuscripts from this program
Examples of AWiSL Knowledge Transfer	- A selection of knowledge transfer examples from the sport leaders and mentors: - Learning from others - Gaining resources and supports from the community - The ripple effect

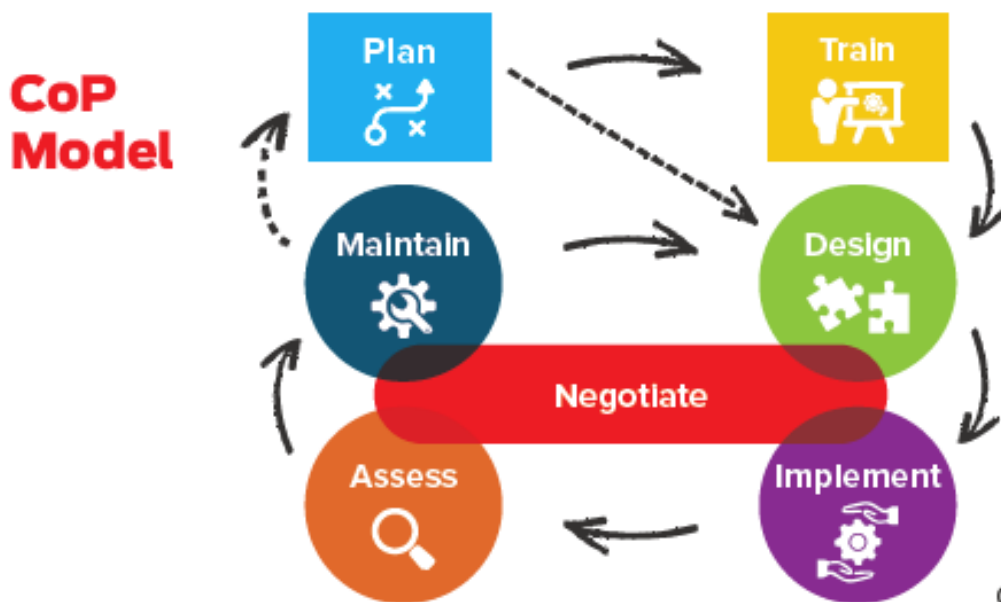
How-to Model

The following how-to model was a key development to achieve the goal of transferring knowledge across the sport systems. This model and accompanying step-by-step guide (see Appendix L) were designed with the intention of providing organizations with a model and framework for implementing a high-value, low-cost initiative to connect people with a shared passion for learning. The two researchers and project lead collaboratively created this evidence-based model through their experiences with the AWiSL CoP, and other experiences framing and facilitating CoPs across sport.



Communities of Practice

It is important to note that although these steps are in an order, CoPs are constantly changing and evolving, so these steps may overlap or may need to be revisited on more than one occasion. PLAN and TRAIN are preliminary steps, which occasionally may need to be revisited. The regular cycle of the CoP comprises DESIGN, IMPLEMENT, ASSESS, MAINTAIN, and then back to DESIGN.



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Presentations and Posters

Table 5. provides a list of key presentations and posters presented to various audiences across the sport landscape. These knowledge transfer opportunities often had a practical lens to inspire coaches and other practitioners working directly on the ground-level in sport.

Table 5.

Presentation/Poster	Location
Canada Games 2019	Red Deer, Alberta
Alberta Sport Leadership Conference 2019	Edmonton, Alberta
GENC Meeting 2019 (Appendix N)	Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
North American Coach Development Summit 2019	Colorado Springs, Colorado
CAC Partner's Congress 2019	Ottawa, Ontario
Global Coaching Conference 2020	Tokyo, Japan
Canadian Sport 4 Life Summit 2020	Gatineau, Quebec
North American Coach Development Summit 2020	Birmingham, Alabama (Postponed – COVID-19)

Publications

The following papers were written to address both academics and practitioners; each paper focuses on a different aspect of the AWiSL. For example, Culver and colleagues (2019) is largely descriptive in nature and provides readers with insights into the development of the AWiSL, in addition to lessons learned and challenges. Kraft & Culver (submitted) focuses on the action learning approach used by the SLLs to develop their social learning leadership capabilities. Each publication acts as a tool to mobilize the findings from our experiences with the AWiSL.

List of publications¹:

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., & Din, C. (in press). Examining a women-only training program for coach developers. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*. (**Appendix K**)

Culver, D.M., Kraft, E., & Cayer, I. (2020). Nurturing social learning spaces to enhance women in sport leadership programs. *Canadian Journal for Women in Coaching*, 20(2), 1-9. (**Appendix D**)

Culver, D.M., Kraft, E., & Duarte, T. (2020). Social learning in communities and networks as a strategy for on-going coach development. In Callary, B. & Gearity, B. *Coach Education and Development in Sport: Instructional Strategies* (pp. 115-128). New York, NY: Routledge. (**Appendix C**)

Culver, D.M., Kraft, E., Din, C., & Cayer, I. (2019). The Alberta women in sport leadership project. A social learning intervention for gender equity, leadership development, and knowledge transfer. *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, 27(2), 110-117. (**Appendix A**)

Kraft, E. & Culver, D.M. (submitted). Using an action learning approach to support social learning leader's development. *Action Learning: Research and Practice*. (**Appendix I**)

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., Din, C., & Cayer, I. (submitted). Navigating the labyrinth of leadership in sport: A community of practice of femininity. *Advancing Women in Leadership*. (**Appendix H**)

Kraft, E., Culver, D.M., Din, C., & Cayer, I. Increasing gender equity in sport organizations: A look at the impacts of a social learning initiative. Manuscript in preparation. *Journal of Sport for Development*. (**Appendix M**)

¹ These publications are copyrighted, therefore unauthorized sharing is not permitted. Please ask the authors of this report if you wish to use any parts of these papers.

Examples of AWiSL Knowledge Transfer

The final section provides examples of the sport leader's and mentor's experiences engaging in knowledge transfer within and beyond the AWiSL. Below is a graphic to show some of the types of knowledge transfer that have occurred.



For many of the sport leaders specifically, this was their first attempt at implementing a project to support gender equity in their sport organizations. Having access to others enabled them to learn from these others' experiences and expertise to inform their own project plans. Resources were shared between the community members and from presenters who were brought in to facilitate workshops with the community. The sport leaders spoke about some of the long-term effects of their projects and how they continue to transfer knowledge across the province (or nation). The following are a selection of sport leader quotes to show the impacts of having been a part of this social learning initiative where there was constant sharing and co-creation of knowledge. The themes introduced in this section include: learning from others, gaining resources and support from the community, and the ripple effect.

Learning from others

Sport Leader 12:

“Learning from [another sport], where they have a policy in place for coaches and female coaches on the bench for all their teams and just hearing even some of the obstacles they have, even though their coach pools are about 50/50. They still find some of the challenges where the female coaches aren’t actually the ones coaching and aren’t as involved, and they aren’t head coaches. So, just that piece of just going ‘Well, if we just put a policy in place that will solve all our problems’ and of course it doesn’t. So, it’s just seeing those different layers and being able to see some of those different things that if, you know, I was sitting there by myself coming up with this idea I might not have seen that as an obstacle or a barrier.”

Sport Leader 11:

“I think the network and just knowing there are other people who might have already done some of these things, could be helpful and just knowing that there are people who can be contacted is just really helpful.”

Sport Leader 10:

“I think even just being together in person at the different workshops that we participate in, different organizations will bring in a different perspective or have different questions.”

Gaining resources and supports from the community

Sport Leader 5:

“I think probably the information that I’ve gathered through all of the discussions and then not even just in the discussion. But it’s awesome to be able to read different books and you know look at different resources online as well. So like an example of the [sport] team that I’m coaching is there are those parts where we have a talk at the beginning of every session before we even talk about actual [sport]; we talk about behaviour on the court, and how we treat each other, and things like that. That all stems from information that I received about female athletes.”

Sport Leader 2:

“I think the fact that knowing there are other sports and other organizations that have had the same challenges, knowing that they have those, and this is a commonality that I can then push for things; knowing that I’m not pushing an agenda that’s solely for our sport or organization.”

Sport Leader 5:

“Definitely by being a female leader and then having some of the information and knowledge that I’ve gained through this program I’ve been able to use like the mentorship and sort of encouraging other females in sport; and so through that we’ve been able to develop our program and we have like 40% female participation.”

The ripple effect

Sport Leader 6:

“And another really cool thing has been our referee development officer has decided that next year he wants to do an all-female regional course. So, that’s an upgrade course for referees, existing referees, and he is pretty confident that there’s never been an all-female regional level course. So, that’s pretty cool. And he was at meetings on the weekend and talking about it with his provincial counterparts and they are very excited about it. So, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba want to send their female candidates to that course.”

Sport Leader 12:

“Oh yeah, I mean otherwise the other opportunities when organizations like the 15 of us get the opportunity to be in a room together are the Alberta sport conferences, which are held every two years. So, I think being able to be in a room with other sports organizations has created a lot of positive connections. [For example] if something pops up at [a sport organization... the [sport leader] just knows to call me...it also does create a community where you know [another sport leader] and I decide to go in and partner on a conference, and now we’re looking at adding other sports... I think that that in-face portion of it and the networking piece has been absolutely huge.”

Value Creation



Value Creation

The next section will present the following themes and discussion points.

Themes	Discussion Points
Definitions	- Introduce and defines the eight cycles of value creation: ○ Immediate value ○ Potential value ○ Applied value ○ Realized value ○ Transformative value ○ Strategic value ○ Enabling value ○ Orienting value
Value Creation Cycles	- A selection of sport leader quotes to illustrate the right cycles
Value Creation Over Time	- A graphic demonstrating the types of value that have been created over time

Definitions

As mentioned above, a key outcome of this evaluation was to assess the perceived value created through the AWiSL CoP. The initial VCF (Wenger et al., 2011) included five value creation cycles: *immediate*, *potential*, *applied*, *realized*, and *transformative*. In their more recent publications (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger Trayner, in press), three additional cycles were introduced: *enabling*, *strategic*, and *orienting value*. These last three cycles are more concerned with “behind-the-scenes” value, for example, strategic conversations that are occurring within the sport organizations, or supports provided by the sport organization (e.g., funding, motivational support, resources) to enable the ongoing facilitation of the projects. Table 6. defines each of the value cycles. Following the table, we provide examples of value for each cycle, from the perspective of the sport leaders.

Table 6.

Value Creation Cycle	Definition
Immediate Value	The result of participating in an interaction or activity
Potential Value	Immediate interactions can create the potential for value to be realized at a later time. The value may in fact never be realized, but value lies in the potential of this knowledge
Applied Value	When knowledge capital from a CoP has been applied to a member’s practice to create change
Realized Value	Change in practice does not guarantee improvement; realized value is ascertained when a community member reflects on the effects of the applied knowledge
Transformative Value	This occurs when the previously used definitions and indicators of success have been redefined
Strategic Value	Conversations with relevant stakeholders and the quality of these conversations to ensure learning makes a difference
Enabling Value	Supportive acts that promote social learning within a community
Orienting Value	Having a stronger understanding of their position in the larger landscape of practice

Value Creation Cycles

Immediate Value

Sport Leader 11:

“I mean I just think anytime that you get a group of people together who have so much knowledge and experience, there’s always something that can be gained from that. And so, I think just having everybody together and learning from other people, I think that that was probably to the best part”

Potential Value

Sport Leader 4:

“The one meeting... the unconscious bias was very interesting because I find myself even just like every day, when you look at somebody and I’m like ‘okay what’s my bias, where am I filling in the story?’ And then the inclusivity which can be anything, it doesn’t have to just be the LGBTQ2I [community], it can be para-athletes, or yeah minorities.”

Applied Value

Sport Leader 5:

“When I was having those struggles and [a mentor] was sending me that information... she actually sent me a talk that Brené Brown had done, and it set me on like reading all the Brené Brown books. Then I started thinking like what other information is out there what other books or podcast can I look at that will help me grow as a leader in the community? And then I have shared some of that with other females in the community that have come up against the struggles or situation; to share that information with them.”

Realized Value

Sport Leader 12:

“[A sport leader] was talking about it one day at the Community of Practice, about how their registrations were declining for the conference and they were looking for new things and new ideas to do, and I just kind of mentioned ‘what about a multi-sport aspect where you’re not focusing so much just on sport but overall leadership skills and PD development’? And [it] kind of just grew from there. It was, it was really pretty exciting to run. Obviously, we always want attendance to be higher, but I think the participants that were there really appreciated the ability to share their stories in their own sport context but understanding that we’re all pretty much facing the same challenges across sport.”

Transformative Value

Sport Leader 6:

“I think I would have been a lot more sort of passive about things...maybe part of that is just being here for as long as I have, but kind of... just going through the motions and just doing my thing. I think I’m more apt to look a little more at ‘How can I do this differently? How can I do this better?’ You know? And I think that’s a direct result of this [CoP]. It’s just looking at things in a different way than I always did.”

Strategic Value

Sport Leader 12:

“You know there’s several people in our organization that I’ve had conversations with, in regard to trying to get more female leaders and coaches and officials in our sport. So, I think those strategic conversations have been a result of this project.”

Enabling Value

Sport Leader 5:

“The condition that [the sport organization] gave me is freedom to organize it how I wanted to. I think they were very trusting to let me do it.”

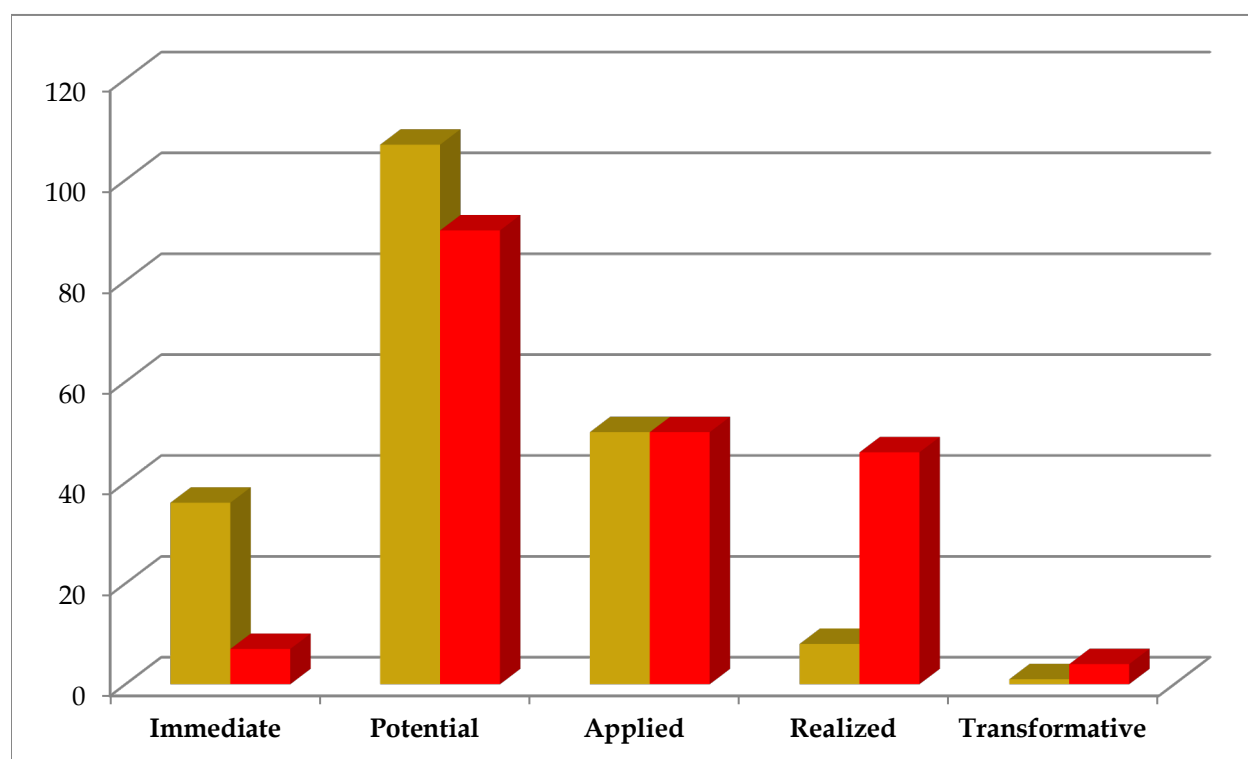
Orienting Value

Sport Leader 1:

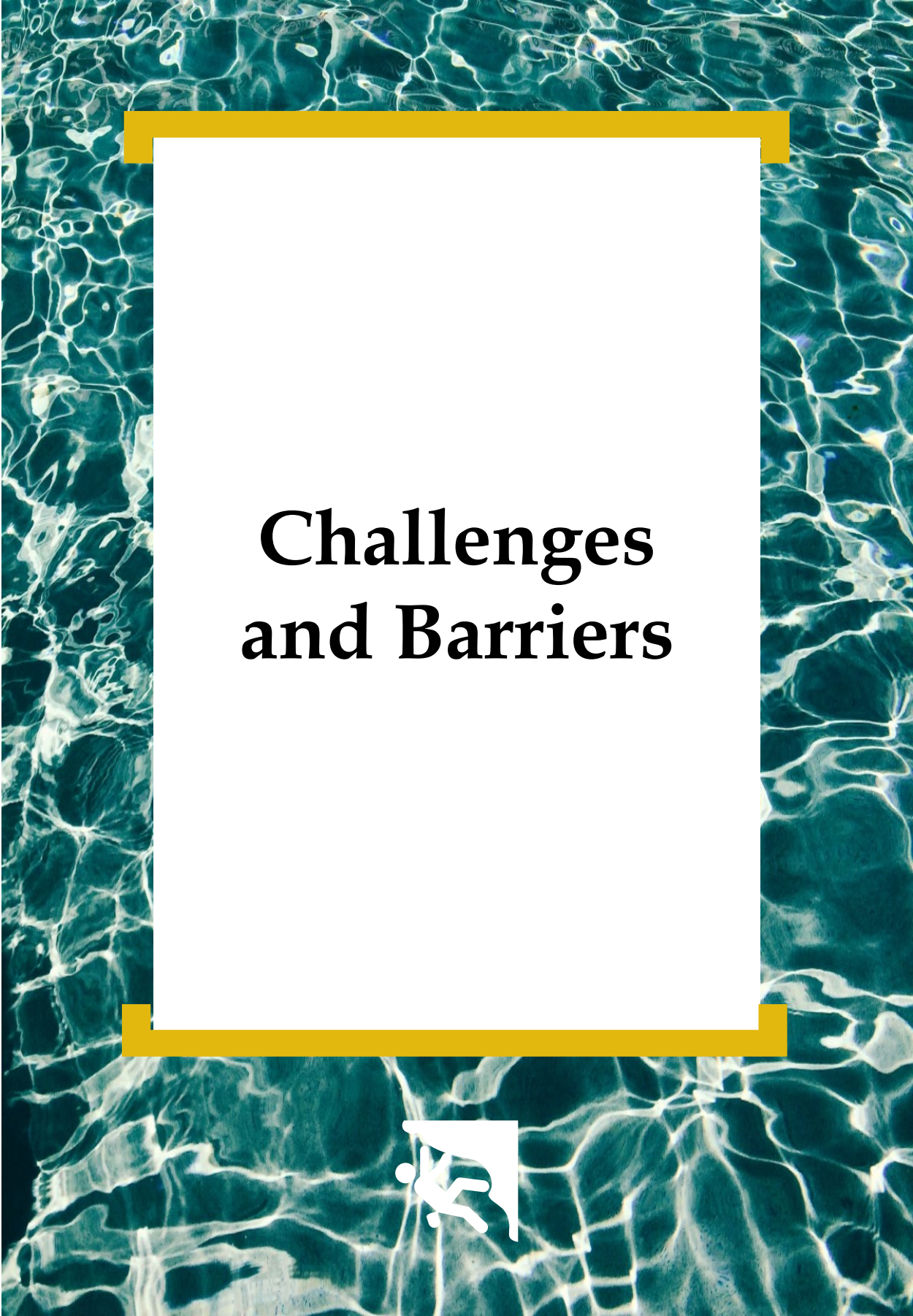
“I think it’s also just given me...a better understanding of the Canadian sport context. So some of the values and the goals of the Coaching Association of Canada how that ties back to the Alberta Sport Connection. So... what impact our centre could potentially have on Alberta and how that would look across Canada.”

Value Creation Over Time

During the Fall 2018, the researchers collected interview data from the sport leaders. These interviews focused on capturing the sport leaders' perceived value of their participation in the CoP. In the Winter 2020, the sport leaders were interviewed a second time with the same purpose. The following graphic shows the instances of value cycles in 2018 (blue graphs) and 2020 (red graphs). In the first round of interviews, there are considerably more instances of *immediate* and *potential* value; in the second round of interviews, there are many more instances of *realized* and *transformative* value. These findings support previous research which has suggested that it takes time for value to move through the value cycles (Bertram et al., 2017). This is one of the benefits of longitudinal data collection, that we are able to see the different types of value that have occurred for the sport leaders, value that will likely continue to develop beyond the evaluation.



*Yellow graphs represent Fall 2018 data, red graphs represent Winter 2020 data



Challenges and Barriers



Challenges and Barriers

The next section will present the following participant groups and discussion points.

Participant Group	Discussion Points
Sport Leaders	- Time - Technology - Prioritizing their projects - Resistance from organizations
Mentors	- Lack of accountability from the sport leaders

As with any new initiative, the sport leaders and mentors did experience challenges and barriers in the execution of, and participation in the AWiSL. The following section presents key challenges and barriers first specific to the sport leaders, and then those specific to the mentors. Some challenges for the mentors have been mentioned throughout this report (i.e., engaging in and embracing uncertainty) and will therefore not be repeated in this section. Collecting this information was not only useful to relay back to the project lead throughout the duration of the project, to adjust activities according to the CoPs needs, but also serves as important information for future iterations of similar interventions.

Sport Leaders

Time

Sport Leader 11:

“Definitely trying to wrap my head around the timeline to get everything off the ground and organized, because I’m a couple months behind here just with some of the shifts in my job; sort of put me a couple months behind where I want to be, so the planning piece would be a big one.”

Sport Leader 4:

“Yes, it is time. Not a lack of desire, it is time.”

Sport Leader 11:

“I feel like there are so many opportunities and there’s only so much time; and I mean I think I chatted with lots of people and got to know some people and I certainly don’t think I was lacking, but I mean it’s just such a room full of amazing people and there’s only so much time in the day, right.”

Technology

Sport Leader 13:

“The only barriers that I’ve experienced on any of these is just the technological barriers and because of that I feel that I haven’t been able to get as much from the community of practice. I know there is a lot that is discussed on...the Go-to-meetings all of those sorts of things that they do. Not being able to participate in those I think has been a barrier for me; and gaining more information and getting more information about what we’re doing.”

Prioritizing their projects

Sport Leader 2:

“You leave the meetings and you’re so gung-ho and you have these ideas that are totally going to happen, but then when you get back to your organization, then reality sinks in a bit and what you’re actually capable of is, it’s, [the] expectation is lower.”

Sport Leader 3:

“My biggest challenge is that the [organization] does not, it’s a priority... but not necessarily every institution is making it a priority.”

Resistance from organizations

Sport Leader 6:

“We had a block of time for women and [sport] for women’s committee to do something. And so, this was kind of my suggestion and what I heard was that there were some of our board members who felt like we need to shift from ‘this is a problem’ to just like ‘what are we doing about it?’ Like you know ‘Woe is me’, and that phrase was used! You know ‘woe is me’ it’s time to just focus on the positive things and why don’t we ask people what they’re doing in their associations instead. That was sort of the suggestion, so there’s acceptance and realization that these are real issues, right? And what can be done sort of on the daily to change things, but also that resistance to you.”

Sport Leader 5:

“There was a group of [sport members] that have like a...club, and so prior to me opening it, they were the only...club in [our city]. So, I’ve got a lot of resistance, a lot of criticism from that organization... For sure the resistance I felt was because they felt threatened because another group was opening and then I think particularly because I was a female.”

Sport Leader 3:

“I think the steps in the regulations and the policies that are in place at the [organization] level ... is a bit of a challenge.... There was kind of an administrative error moving the project forward from year one to year two and making the motions forward next year; me thinking that they were accepted, and then reflecting in the minutes that they were moved or something like that to spring meeting... And then just the fact that you have to go through all the steps to get three thousand dollars...but I’m really going to let the project not continue with funding over like three thousand dollars, right? Where I’m sure if we would have called a special meeting or something, they could have found three thousand dollars somewhere, right? That was the frustration for me.”

Mentors

Lack of accountability from sport leaders

Mentor 2:

“I’ve never worked with a group where people didn’t respond; and that for me has been a whole new sort of piece; and I’m still trying to sort of show up on their doorstep. Yes, I mean you got to talk to me, you got to communicate! That, it’s been frustrating”

Mentor 1:

“The biggest challenge is wondering why everybody doesn’t kind of show up.”

Mentor 3:

“I’m learning that [my] feeling valued is not the responsibility of the [sport leaders] ... feeling valued is up to me to be able to look in the mirror and be proud of the contributions that I’m making. So yes, it’s a matter of self-worth... most of us get our self-worth from what we think others think of us... That transfers into everything... So, there’s a feeling of, ‘What do I need to feel valued as a leader, everything that I do.’ And if I bring myself to the table in every context, that helps me sleep very well at night.”

Conclusion

Over a two-and-a-half-year period, the women and male allies of the AWiSL supported 12 sport leaders and six mentors in developing their leadership skills and capabilities, increasing gender equity and knowledge transfer across the province of Alberta and beyond. This evaluation captures the quotes and various forms of data collected over a 1.5-year period to highlight the many forms of value that have been created through this initiative. In addition to developing themselves, the sport leaders and mentors successfully implemented sport and physical activity focused projects that have reached over 790 women, girls, and individuals from marginalized populations. Along with the University of Ottawa research team, the AWiSL has contributed several scholarly publications to the fields of sport and leadership, and developed a how-to model to maintain the legacy of the AWiSL and inspire others to maintain the momentum this type of initiative for change.

Funding

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Author Biographies

Erin Kraft is a doctoral candidate in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa. As a former swim coach with over 10 years of experience, Erin primarily coached children with developmental disabilities. She holds a master's in education where she examined coaches' experiences teaching children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in aquatic programs. More recently, Erin's research interests have shifted and focus on developing social learning spaces, as an approach to facilitate learning opportunities in sport. Her doctoral research uses these social learning spaces to increase gender equity and leadership diversity across sport, and to expand the learning capabilities of Canadian Parasport coaches.

Diane Culver is an Associate Professor in the School of Human Kinetics, University of Ottawa. Her research interests include coach development and qualitative research. She is currently funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to research Parasport coaching, and women in sport organizations. In her teaching, research, and consulting she is particularly interested in social learning theory and building social learning capability in sport. Diane is also an alpine ski coach who has worked with all levels of skiers from youth to Olympic levels. She now coaches masters skiers and mentors youth coaches.

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Appendix I – Kraft & Culver (Manuscript; paper 2)

Appendix J – Needs assessment

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Appendix L – How-to Model

Appendix M – Kraft, Culver, Din & Cayer (Manuscript; paper 4)

Appendix N – Poster for GENC meeting