

New research explores how curling is the rock of rural communities

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Social support is crucial to the health of rural women in Canada. As rural communities shrink and their sport facilities deteriorate, rural women - already struggling for equal status in many areas of social life - are seeing their opportunities for group activity and social interaction disappear.

By examining the social lives and health of female curlers, new research from The University of Western Ontario is looking to understand how sport and recreation activities differ for women in diverse [rural communities](#) across Canada and to determine how health, sport, and recreation can be better understood within the broader contexts of gender and community change in rural areas.

“In small rural areas that are particularly isolated, curling is a major event of the week, not only as a winter sport, but as place to meet socially,” says lead researcher Beverly D. Leipert, a professor of Nursing who for six years held the Ontario Women’s Health Council Chair in Rural Women’s Health Research at The University of Western Ontario. “People will gather at the curling rink even if they don’t curl. They come to have a cup of coffee and a piece of pie and to visit and watch a game. It’s a gathering place.”

In this study - the first to explore the effects of curling activities on the social lives and health of rural women in Canada - more than 50 mothers, daughters, grandmothers, granddaughters, sisters, and friends from Nova Scotia, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, and Ontario are

taking photographs, recording in log books, and participating in focus groups to explore the influence of curling on their social lives and health.

“In some communities in Canada, even if they’ve lost their grocery store or their grain elevators on the prairies, the curling rink survives. It’s often the last thing to go and I think it’s because of the [social connections](#) to the community,” says Leipert.

Provided by University of Western Ontario

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