

**Creating a culture of healthy
food in schools and
recreation and sports
settings**

Lessons from the field

**Sparking
Population
Health Solutions**
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**DALHOUSIE
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Background

Population health interventions are needed to support healthier eating

Schools, recreation and sport settings offer a setting for intervention

- * These settings often promote physical activity BUT...
- * The food environment is often neglected
- * Healthy eating may be sacrificed in the pursuit of leisure-time physical activity (Chircop et al, 2013)



Photo with permission:
www.carlwarner.com/foodscapes/

Background: Nova Scotia context



- * Review and revision of existing mandatory school food and nutrition policy
- * Development of non-mandatory guidelines for recreation and sport settings



Opportunity to explore the complex processes involved in implementing such policies and evaluating their potential impact on population health

Population health intervention research

- * Partnered with Department of Health and Wellness to provide a 'current state' of food environments and provide a measure to document change
- * CIHR funds obtained, Population Health Intervention Research competition

Assess current state of
food environments
(2014-16)



Describe system influences
(2016-18)



Understand factors that
influence implementation
(2016-18)

Purpose of this presentation

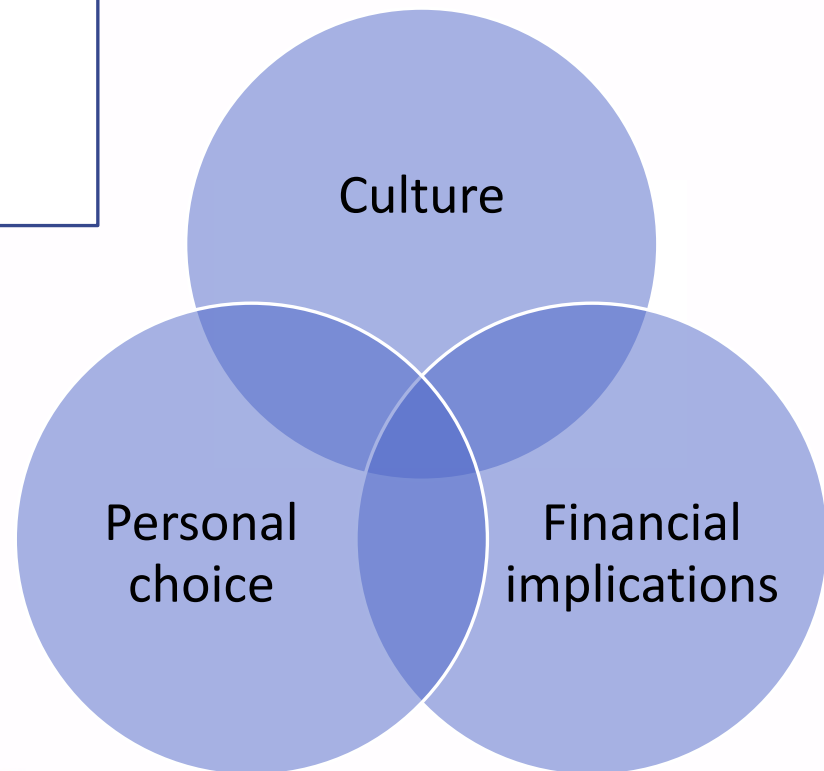
- * To qualitatively describe the food environments of recreation and sport settings
- * To discuss the similarities and differences between factors and processes that may influence implementation of healthy eating guidelines in schools, recreation and sport settings

Methods

- * Interviews with stakeholders from recreation and sport settings across Nova Scotia (n=10)
- * Questions explored stakeholder experiences with healthy eating policies and practices and factors influencing facility changes to improve healthy eating
- * Thematic analysis used to provide a rich description of stakeholder experience

Results

- All stated they personally valued healthy eating and wanted to provide some options for patrons
- 6 not implementing a healthy eating policy, 2 of these identified some healthier practices
- 3 had adopted a healthy eating policy or guideline



Results

- * Culture of healthy eating

Recreation Manager: *“Baseball is probably the biggest barrier for nutritional change...due to I don’t know, **nostalgia**, or food related items that are just **attached to baseball culture...**”* Recreation Manager

- * Personal choice

Recreation Manager: *“... for some reason there **doesn’t seem to be the same, value judgement attached, to doing more physical activity...** there’s **a lot of defensiveness** with people being like, **well I’m an adult and I get to choose what I can eat.**”*

- * Financial implications

Facility Manager: *“...selling something that’s going to create a healthier community versus something that’s going to cost, that could lose money, is a tough sell...**people look at dollar value versus health value unfortunately.**”*

Linkage to other settings and research

- Consistent with other research in Canada
 - Need to generate profit was seen as conflicting with public health goals (Olstad et al. 2013)
- Similarities with our earlier school research
 - Traditions, food-related fundraising and business models in school cafeterias make it challenging for schools (McIsaac et al. 2013)

Principal: *"Well the biggest issue for us was the celebration, culture defines us, right? Our food defines our culture..."*

Principal: *"... the fact that we're profit-driven, we're selling our soul."*

Conclusions and implications

- * Stakeholders may recognize that supporting healthy eating policies is 'the right thing to do' but this is contradicted by current socio-cultural norms and a need to generate revenue
- * Targeting changes in cultural food norms and addressing financial implications is essential in creating supportive nutrition environments where children live, learn and play



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