

A photograph of three children standing in a field. The child on the left is a girl wearing a grey helmet, a white t-shirt with blue polka dots, and denim overalls. The child in the middle is a boy wearing a red helmet and a blue button-down shirt. The child on the right is a boy wearing a black helmet and a blue and white striped polo shirt. They are all smiling and have their arms around each other. A red and white bicycle is partially visible in the foreground.

KIDS IN RUSSELL, MANITOBA LOVE ACTIVE LIVING...

Especially in the Mud!

**THE FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATION
IN CANADA GOALS AND PRIORITIES:**



**ACTIVE
LIVING**

CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

The Municipality had few options for children and youth in recreation and sport outside of traditional programming in hockey, figure skating, baseball and softball. The Recreation Commission was looking for a new activity to address Goal 1 (Active Living) that would increase young people's opportunities to learn and enjoy an activity in nature that was fun and challenging, and can be practiced for a lifetime and with other family members. Off road/mountain cycling was the answer and a good fit with the natural environment. But the Commission would need help to get the program going.

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IMPLEMENTATION

When Recreation Director Michelle Horncastle contacted the Manitoba Cycling Association in 2016, the Kids of Mud program was only run by Clubs and there were only two in rural areas west of Winnipeg. She gained their support to start up a program in Russell-Binscarth and to send their coach facilitator to run a local Coaching Clinic. The Recreation Commission was determined to offer an affordable program to families in the area and applied for and received support funding from the Sport Manitoba “new regional sport” grant program. Community residents were solidly behind the initiative and two community members, who were very experienced cyclists, emerged as volunteers to take the training and be lead coaches in the program.

OUTCOMES

The Kids of Mud program in Russell was the first to be run by a Recreation Board (not an independent club), and it was the first time the Manitoba Cycling Association did a clinic in a rural area outside of Winnipeg.

In the first year, the program ran two days a week with three coaches and 10 participants learning basic skills. By the time the Coaching Clinic was held in April 2017, the number of coaches increased from 3 to 16, including volunteer coaches from communities across the Parkland and Northern regions in Manitoba.

In the second year, the West 204 Cycling Club formed and became involved, running the program and building jumps and ramps for participants (that were left in the park for all to use).

The relationship established with the Manitoba Cycling Association (MCA) led to other complementary events, including a bike clinic by one of the MCA Board members, which helped to raise the profile of the program and inform the community of the benefits of cycling. The Recreation Director was also able to secure a bike rodeo/ safety clinic sponsored by Manitoba Public Insurance.

LESSONS LEARNED

Look to your community for experienced people who may become leaders and voluntary coaches. “Residents Alexander Bishop and Bernard Neuhofer had both experience and true passion for cycling,” says Horncastle. “They are what really made the program successful.”

Reach out to your Provincial Sport Organizations and ask for their help with training and in modifying programs to fit the needs and strengths of rural areas. Take advantage of their training materials and expert resources. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Be prepared for a good program idea to grow quickly. Get the community involved and excited; take advantage of opportunities to help it grow with new partners.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Michelle Horncastle, Recreation Director, Assiniboine Valley Recreation: mhorncastle@mrbgov.com
- Sport Manitoba: information on grant funding: www.sportmanitoba.ca/grants
- Manitoba Cycling Association “Kids of Mud”: <http://mbcycling.ca/kids-of-mud/>
- Kids of Mud is a national program. Contact your Provincial/Territorial Cycling Association for information and help with launching the program in your area.

Framework Goal and Priority	Goal 1: Active Living; Priority 3 Active Play
Population Addressed	Children and youth, ages 7 to 16
Community	Town of Russell (Population 1,800) is part of the new Municipality of Russell Binscarth (total 2,500). Russell is the service centre for the region and is surrounded by picturesque landscapes, river valleys, prairie lakes, ski areas and rolling terrain for grain and livestock production.
Setting	Rural
Lead Implementer and Organization	Michelle Horncastle, Recreation Director, Assiniboine Valley Recreation
Key Partners	Manitoba Cycling Association
Activity Focus	<i>Kids of Mud</i> , a learn to ride and race (off road) cycling program
Stage of Development	Ongoing, expanding