

Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Tumbler Ridge, BC

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December 2011

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Acknowledgements

In September, our research team visited Tumbler Ridge to conduct key informant interviews as part of a larger project looking at the role of voluntarism in aging resource communities. We wish to thank the local leaders and members of voluntary organizations and community groups, as well as the seniors living in the community who took the time to answer our many questions.

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December 2011

Availability

Copies of all reports associated with this project have been deposited with the District of Tumbler Ridge and at the Tumbler Ridge Public Library. At the University of Northern British Columbia, copies have been deposited at the Weller Library or can be accessed on the Community Development Institute website: <http://www.unbc.ca/cdi/research.html>.

Project Reports

- Voluntarism, Ageing and Place: A Critical Review
- Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Quesnel, BC
- Dimensions of Voluntarism in Aging Resource Towns: Preliminary Scan of Tumbler Ridge, BC

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1.0 Introduction

Many rural and small town places in northern British Columbia (BC) were established and designed to attract young families. Since the 1980s, however, the population of these communities has been aging. In Tumbler Ridge, the influx of retirees following mine closures meant that the town underwent a sudden aging process with significant changes in community priorities and needs. As a resource based town, Tumbler Ridge has experienced demographic fluctuations. Census data shows a 51% population decline from 3,775 to 1,851 between 1996 and 2001, a period during which one of the two mines, the town's main employers at the time, closed. This was followed by a 32% increase between 2001 and 2006 to 2,454, a time period including the closure of the second mine, an extensive housing sale, diversification efforts, and the emergence of new mining opportunities. The population aged 65 and over more than doubled from less than 5% in 2001 to over 11% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, Community Profiles). Another aging component is the increase in the proportion of the older workforce, aged 45 and over, from 10.7% in 1986 to 46.7% in 2006 (Statistics Canada, 1986 and 2006 Census).

The rising number of older residents and those who plan their retirement in Tumbler Ridge translates to a growing population with specific community, service, and support interests and needs. Tumbler Ridge has responded to those challenges by offering a range of services to support older residents, such as seniors' housing, activities, and increased infrastructure accessibility. However, some gaps remain, including for specialized medical services, transportation arrangements to meet local and regional needs, and challenges related to the remoteness of the location and the climate.

This report is part of a larger project that examines the role of the voluntary sector in supporting older residents as well as the influence of seniors and volunteer organizations on community development in aging resource communities (Table 1.1). Addressing service gaps is important, especially in the unique context of Canada's resource hinterland where the social dynamics of economic restructuring have created the relatively new phenomenon of resource frontier aging in communities that have never dealt with population aging before. The project looks at the potential of the voluntary sector as an individual and community response to the opportunities and challenges of population aging in two resource communities: Tumbler Ridge and Quesnel. This report provides preliminary information about the dimensions of voluntarism in BC's aging resource towns to establish the empirical foundation for further phases of the project. The project is based out of the UNBC Community Development Institute in collaboration with Mark Skinner at Trent University and Alun Joseph at the University of Guelph.

Table 1.1 Timeline

August 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project proposal completed• UNBC Research Ethics Board process completed• Project beginning• Identification of potential key participants
September 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization and scheduling of interviews• Conducting local interviews
October 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conducting local interviews• Summary notes reviewed by participants
November 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of analysis
December 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completion of preliminary scan report

2.0 Methodology: Preliminary Scans

As part of the larger UNBC-Trend-Guelph project, Tumbler Ridge and Quesnel were selected as potential case studies in BC to examine the role of volunteer groups and older residents in supporting community development in aging resource communities. Preliminary scans, involving key informant interviews, were carried-out to establish the suitability of Quesnel and Tumbler Ridge as case study sites.

2.1 Research Ethics

The key informant interviews involved interactions with local residents. Project information, consent forms, and interview guides were presented to UNBC’s Research Ethics Board for review before commencement of the interview scheduling.

Prior to each interview, a consent form was reviewed and signed by each participant to ensure they understood the purposes of the study and that their participation was voluntary. Participants were provided with their own copy of the consent form (Appendix 1). This form also outlined how participants’ anonymity and confidentiality would be protected throughout the process as well as in the analysis to ensure that there are no linkages between the data and individuals.

2.2 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews with local leaders, representatives from voluntary organizations and community groups, as well as with older residents were conducted in Tumbler Ridge on September 14 and 15, 2011. A copy of the interview guide is attached (Appendix 2). The purpose was to collect general information about the implications of recent population and socioeconomic change in the community, the role of the voluntary sector in addressing the implications of these changes, and the role of seniors in community development. In the interviews, we examined the role that voluntary organizations, community groups, and volunteers play in supporting older people and in influencing community development in aging resource communities, as well as seniors’ roles in community development. Questions were structured to address the following areas:

- community dimensions of aging,
- the role of voluntary groups in addressing seniors' needs,
- the role of voluntarism in community transformation in general, and
- best practices and key challenges to support the work of these groups.

Key informants were drawn from seniors' community groups, service providers, businesses, and local government in order to obtain views from people actively engaged in the voluntary sector and in seniors' issues. The key informants were selected from publicly available lists. A total of 13 interviews were conducted with 15 residents in Tumbler Ridge.

Potential interview participants were contacted by telephone to describe the project and to ask if they would be willing to participate. For those willing to participate, we arranged a meeting at a time and place convenient to the key participant. Locations included public places, work places, and participants' homes according to their preference and availability. Prior to the interview, they were again advised about the purpose of the research, the issues in the consent form outlining ethics and confidentiality arrangements, and the completed consent form was collected. During the interview, the interviewer took handwritten notes and, with the consent of the participant, recorded the interview with a digital recording device. Interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes on average. Following the interviews, the researchers produced written files of the notes and provided each participant with a digital copy of the draft notes of their interview, allowing a two-week time period for feedback. This was to ensure that all responses were accurately captured in the notes. All participants received a copy of the final project report.

2.3 Analysis

Notes from all interviews were compiled into one text file with codes protecting participant identities. Using qualitative analysis, patterns and themes were identified, coded, and categorized. Once categories were established, the responses were tallied and sorted to reflect the dominance of themes throughout the interviews. In the data tables, categories are underlined, and the number in parentheses next to each category indicates the total number of participant responses captured in that category. Under each category, the individual responses are listed, again with numbers indicating by how many participants each response was mentioned. Tables from some questions are not included in the report but will inform the community contact database for later phases of this project. In the results discussion in this report, data tables and a detailed description of the issues and topics captured in the tables are provided.

2.4 The Participants

General breakdowns of interview participants by age, employment status, and occupation are shown in Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3. The participants ranged from younger than 50 to older than 70, with individuals in their 50s forming the largest age group. The majority of participants were employed or self-employed, and approximately a quarter of the participants were retired. Participants represented a range of occupations. Medical and emergency services, public service, and retirement were featured most prominently, which reflects the study background of aging

populations and their service needs. Other occupations included business ownership, education, and the mining sector.

Table 2.1 Participant age

Years of age	Total # of respondents	Percent
Under 50	2	13.3
50 to 59	7	46.7
60 to 69	4	26.7
70 or older	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0

Table 2.2 Employment status

	Total # of respondents	Percent
Employed	9	60.0
Self-employed	2	13.3
Retired	4	26.7
Total	15	100.0

Table 2.3 Participant occupations

Medical / emergency services (4)
Public service (4)
Retirement (4)
Business owner (2)
Education (2)
Mining (1)

Note: Multiple occupations per person are possible.

The participants included short-, medium-, and long-term residents, with lengths of residency ranging from less than 10 years to more than 20 years (Table 2.4). Given that Tumbler Ridge is a relatively young ‘instant town’, this range represents the full breadth of residents including those who have lived there since its early years as well as those who were attracted to Tumbler Ridge recently as part of a retirement move.

As Table 2.5 shows, participants’ reasons for moving to Tumbler Ridge encompassed a number of motivations, with employment opportunities, affordable housing, and small town lifestyle

being most prominent, followed by location characteristics, and other career and family reasons. Finally, Table 2.6 indicates that the majority of participants are very involved in local organizations.

Table 2.4 Length of residency in Tumbler Ridge

Years	Total # of respondents	Percent
Less than 10	5	33.3
10 to 19	6	40.0
20 or more	4	26.7
Total	15	100.0

Table 2.5 Reasons for moving to Tumbler Ridge

- Employment (6)
- Affordable housing (4)
- Small town lifestyle (4)
- Outdoor activities (3)
- Family (2)
- Spouse's employment (2)
- Business opportunity (1)
- Change (1)
- Friendly community (1)
- Retirement (1)

Table 2.6 Volunteer membership in local organizations

# of organizations	Total # of respondents	Percent
0 to 3	7	46.7
4 or more	8	53.3
Total	15	100.0

Note: This does not include past memberships and business sponsorships. Some of the participants received stipends for some of their roles in the community.

3.0 Preliminary Results

This section outlines the most significant findings from the key informant interviews in Tumbler Ridge.

3.1 Community Dimensions of Aging

Population aging has numerous implications for community development as seniors have specific service and support needs, interests, and contributions to the community. Therefore, participants were asked to elaborate on the importance of aging in community development. Participants generally agreed that aging is important in community development. The areas of significance in terms of aging included changes in community dynamics, adjustments in planning and services, changes due to the re-opening of the mines, and an influence of the seniors' population on community participation. Sudden aging through an influx of retirees after mine closures increased the attention given to the needs of an aging population. This was demonstrated through the creation of the Tumbler Ridge Seniors' Needs Task Force. In relation to that development, participants talked about age-specific infrastructure, service, and support needs. With comparable emphasis, they also described more recent developments due to the re-opening of mines, which affected cost of living, perceptions of safety, and, again, changes in the community dynamics. It was also repeatedly pointed out that seniors are a particularly active demographic in the community and play a central role in community groups and activities (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Importance of aging in community development

Community dynamics (16):

- Aged over night through migration (4)
- Designed for young families (4)
- Seniors provide a “normal” community dynamic / mentorship /sense of community (4)
- Aging in place (1)
- Initial residents are aging now (1)
- Population mostly young families (1)
- Seniors helped Tumbler Ridge to survive (1)

Planning and services (16):

- Identify needs to make the town livable for aging in place (3)
- Health authorities do not acknowledge seniors’ needs in Tumbler Ridge (2)
- Health services are being reduced (2)
- Lack of services / amenities (2)
- Seniors’ needs often coincide with disability needs (2)
- Accessibility and safety issues with sidewalks (1)
- Lack of organized youth activities (1)
- Need home care (1)
- Projects directed at seniors help the whole community (1)
- Seniors are recipients of local planning and services (1)

Change with re-opening of the mines (14):

- Seniors leaving because of shift of housing market (4)
- Experienced / expected increase in drug and crime issues (2)
- Seniors leaving because their needs are forgotten / unmet (2)
- Tumbler Ridge’s population is growing / getting younger / more transient (2)
- Community capacity diminishing while effort made for new services and initiatives (1)
- Difficult for seniors on fixed incomes to make ends meet (1)
- Mining community mentality has not changed to incorporate seniors (1)
- Retirement town mentality versus resource industry town mentality (1)

Community participation (10):

- Seniors contribute through local involvement (4)
 - Fewer community activities (2)
 - Influx of retirees with time / interest to support clubs (2)
 - Lack of recognition of seniors’ contributions (1)
 - Senior volunteer burnout is a problem (1)
-

After discussing the importance of aging in community development in general, participants were asked to describe the effects of aging on local community development (Table 3.2). Responses focused on community adaptations to accommodate the aging population. The most prominently featured category was attention to population aging in policy and planning. This has been manifested in municipal support for a seniors’ task force and the inclusion of seniors’ input in identifying their needs.

Building on local achievements, responses showed that continued attention is needed to support service and infrastructure changes to adapt to seniors' needs. With community aging, the scale of community needs widens, and medical care and transportation challenges call for innovative solutions in Tumble Ridge. Given the cold winters and increased numbers of seniors in the community, it will be important, for example, to continue to follow through with physical infrastructure changes as recommended by the Measuring up the North initiative in order to enhance the local mobility and safety of older residents.

Table 3.2 Population aging in local community development

Policy / planning changes (13):

- Municipal support / policy efforts (4)
- Seniors' Needs Task Force established (2)
- Awareness campaigns about available services or service substitutes (1)
- Changes and initiatives depend on local government assistance and community support (1)
- Community needed to rethink Tumbler Ridge (1)
- Revised Official Community Plan for industrial traffic regulations, air quality, and safety (1)
- Revitalization tax incentives (1)
- Seniors were included in identifying their needs (1)
- Seniors provided critical support to the tax base during the transition period (1)

Lack of service / infrastructure changes (12):

- There has been little or no change (4)
- Lack of adequate medical / emergency services and staff (2)
- Seniors transportation has not been a priority (2)
- Health authority has not reacted (1)
- Home care needs are not met (1)
- Measuring up the North criteria have not been acted upon (1)
- Wider scale of needs is recognized but not reflected in services (1)

Service / infrastructure changes (7):

- Sudden need to address different medical and other needs (3)
- Efforts underway to respond to regional transportation needs (1)
- Northern Lights College offered first aid and geriatrics courses (1)
- Pharmacy stock adapted (1)
- School closures with out-migration of families and in-migration of seniors (1)

Other (3):

- Harsh climate leads to senior out-migration (1)
 - Mines reopened (1)
 - Wrong expectations lead to senior out-migration (1)
-

Table 3.3 Past local efforts targeted towards seniors

Infrastructure (25):

- Seniors' housing (12)
- Accessibility of public buildings with ramps / elevators (3)
- Lowered curbs (3)
- Accessibility building standards (2)
- Accessibility of retail with accessible aisles / washrooms (2)
- Efforts for in-town transportation (2)
- Local taxi service for grocery pick-up (1)

Recreation and socializing (16):

- Seniors' Corner (7)
- Accessible Community Garden (4)
- Exercise opportunities for seniors (2)
- 49 Forever (1)
- Trails enhanced for elderly users (1)
- Variety of seniors' groups at the Community Centre (1)

Services and service organizations (15):

- Seniors' Needs Task Force (7)
- Medical service adaptation / improved health care, e.g. blood pressure unit / weekend clinic (3)
- Efforts to acquire Life Line (1)
- Fire wood program (1)
- Meals on wheels established (1)
- Snow Angels program (1)
- Strategic plan to address seniors' needs (1)

Gaps (6):

- Lack of home support (1)
 - Lack of in-town theatre / entertainment: money drains out of community (1)
 - Lack of men's programs (1)
 - Lack of professional services and trades (1)
 - Lack of social workers (1)
 - Lack of support for women living alone (1)
-

To complement community development initiatives and to include the reciprocity component of aging in community development, in the following two questions participants were asked about specific efforts targeting seniors in Tumbler Ridge and the breadth of seniors' involvement in the community. Table 3.3 summarizes and categorizes a wide range of local efforts in response to seniors' needs and interests. Infrastructure improvements for seniors, for example, included the development of the new seniors' housing complex. Furthermore, accessibility improvements were made, including access to public buildings with new ramps and elevators, lowered curbs to facilitate wheelchair mobility around town, and restructured retail spaces with wider aisles and accessible washrooms. TR Cares has worked to improve in-town solutions to regional transportation challenges. Further efforts to improve recreation and socializing opportunities, including the establishment of the Seniors' Corner; gardening, exercise, and outdoor activities; and other seniors' groups. Moreover, the establishment and work of services and service

organizations have added a number of necessary and convenient options for seniors. Above all, the Seniors' Needs Task Force is an accomplishment for, and acknowledgement of, seniors and their needs in Tumbler Ridge. Medical care challenges have been met with additional services. Some gaps identified by the participants point the direction for continued efforts and improvements.

With their accumulated knowledge, experiences, networks, and spare time, seniors can make substantial contributions to community development. Table 3.4 lists a wide variety of organizations in which seniors are involved for the benefit of the community at large. These organizations cover a wide range of community services and activities for all ages, including health, environmental, recreational, community supports, social, and emergency services.

In projects and initiatives, participants elaborated on seniors' roles and the nature of their involvement in the community, indicating a number of community activities, events, initiatives, and services largely depend on seniors. This dependence is based on seniors' high capacity and activity levels, which place them in pivotal roles in the community, especially in the voluntary sector. It also included support for community infrastructure and facilities, and involvement in high profile events which help to promote the community.

Table 3.4 Local seniors' involvement in community development and social planning

Service organizations / clubs with considerable senior membership (43):

Lions Club (5)
Museum Society Foundation (5)
Seniors' Corner (5)
Garden Club (3)
Library Board (3)
TR Cares (3)
Choir (2)
Hospice and palliative care (2)
Seniors' Needs Task Force (2)
49 Forever (1)
55+ (1)
Bottle Depot (1)
Ducks Unlimited (1)
Drama Club (1)
Fire hall (1)
Food Bank (1)
Happy Hookers Knitting Club (1)
Palliative Care Society (1)
Quilting Guild (1)
Red Hat Society (1)
Tumbler Ridge Old Timers' Society (1)
Wolverine and Nordic Mountain Society (1)

Projects and Initiatives (34):

Many organizations and activities are run by seniors (5)
Community Garden (4)
The same seniors are often involved in many things (3)
Senior volunteers have been key driving forces in the community (3)
Seniors' initiatives are driven by seniors (3)
Seniors are active for youth, e.g. skateboard park, youth corner (3)
Seniors have the time / will / capacity to volunteer (2)
Emperor's Challenge (1)
Many active seniors are relocating (1)
Outdoor facilities of Monkman Park / Kinuseo Falls (1)
Restorative Justice and police guards (1)
Seniors are active for the general community (1)
Seniors are instrumental in providing community programs and services (1)
Seniors' Curling (1)
Seniors' Games (1)
Seniors often families' babysitters /unable to participate in social activities (1)
Seniors create social inclusiveness (1)
Senior volunteers support youth programs (1)
Tourism Centre (1)

Apart from the Seniors’ Needs Task Force, service clubs, the Community Garden, and health related organizations or individuals were identified to be most attuned to seniors’ needs (Table 3.5). Churches, the Seniors’ Corner, and a number of other community groups with social, recreational, low-income support, service, governance, and fundraising mandates have also provided important supports to address seniors’ needs. Groups that were perceived to be attuned to population aging coincided with the organizations with significant seniors’ involvement. This phenomenon was confirmed by one participant who found that seniors are the ones who are most attuned to seniors’ needs and that the best support for seniors comes from other seniors in the community.

Table 3.5 Local groups attuned to population aging

Seniors’ Needs Task Force (7)	Food Bank (1)
Lions Club (5)	Local government (1)
Community Garden (4)	Quilting Guild (1)
TR Cares (4)	Red Hats (1)
Hospice / Palliative Care (3)	Seniors helping seniors (1)
Medical services and doctors (3)	Tumbler Ridge Old Timers’ Society (1)
Churches (2)	
Seniors’ Corner (2)	<u>Not responding to seniors’ needs:</u>
Community Centre (1)	Businesses (1)

The final question to participants in this section aimed to provide an overview of local perceptions of what was special about growing older in Tumbler Ridge. As Table 3.6 demonstrates, participants provided insight into a number of challenges that have to be considered in continued community responses to seniors’ needs. The isolation and cold winters dictate a lot of service and support needs in Tumbler Ridge. The areas predominantly impacted by these factors are medical and other community service availability and transportation needs. At the same time, participants pointed out that innovative service solutions have compensated for limited local medical services. It was noted that the isolated location provides Tumbler Ridge residents with an advantage as they receive priority treatment in regional centres. Diversification of community economic development requires the reconciliation of different interests and priorities. While this suggests planning and development challenges, participants clearly communicated their positive perceptions of community characteristics, such as affordable housing, community cohesion, and recreational opportunities in combination that enhance overall health and quality of life.

Table 3.6 Growing older in Tumbler Ridge

Negative comments (23):

- Lack of / distance to medical / home support / other services (6)
- Hazardous winter travel conditions (3)
- Resurgence of mining; busy / transient (3)
- Harsh winter (2)
- Need to be in good health (2)
- Abusive environments (1)
- Lack of company engagement in community development (1)
- Limited competitive sports opportunities (1)
- No trades in town (1)
- Outdoor recreation is impacted by mining (1)
- Public transportation challenges (1)
- Remoteness (1)

Positive comments (13):

- Medical services coordination compensates for lack of local services, e.g. patients taken out of Tumbler Ridge have no waiting times (3)
- Affordable housing (2)
- Sense of community and involvement (2)
- Accessible outdoor recreation (1)
- Friendly and welcoming energy after housing sale (1)
- Golf course (1)
- Healthy and active community (1)
- Seniors who have moved to Tumbler Ridge are active and healthy (1)
- Transition to an age-friendly town (1)

Neutral comments (2):

- Seniors are a new population group in Tumbler Ridge (1)
 - Seniors are the only ones who have time to volunteer (1)
-

3.2 Voluntarism and Community Transformation

In rural and small town communities, the voluntary sector takes on many roles to help residents respond to the opportunities and challenges associated with community change. Due to this, participants were asked about the role of the voluntary sector in the community and how this has influenced life in Tumbler Ridge.

Table 3.7 Voluntary sector influence on community development

Social / recreation opportunities (19):

- Recreational facilities and activities (9)
- Contributions to entertainment / arts / events (6)
- Outdoor recreation (2)
- Mental health improvements through involvement (2)

Community supports (15):

- Filling the gaps in provincial and other supports (6)
- Battles for health care taken to higher levels (3)
- Service clubs provide activities and services (3)
- Health care improvements / support achieved (2)
- Without volunteers, needs would be unmet (1)

Community economic development (13):

- Contribution to infrastructure (2)
- Reputation; volunteer efforts create advertising for Tumbler Ridge (2)
- Attractions expand tourism potential (1)
- Contribution of volunteers goes beyond what money can do (1)
- Cooperation with industries for services (1)
- Economic diversification efforts build on volunteer achievements (1)
- Good working relationship between volunteers and BC Parks (1)
- Influences municipal policy, e.g. visitability (1)
- Senior volunteers have important skills (1)
- Seniors' Needs Task Force has become representative body for community issues / planning (1)
- Voluntarism carries development in town (1)

Lacking influence (3):

- Lack of volunteers in some areas has led to loss of programs and services (1)
 - No influence of voluntary sector on community development (1)
 - Voluntary efforts in the business sector less successful; Chamber of Commerce discontinued (1)
-

As Table 3.7 shows, participants saw a substantial influence of the voluntary sector on community development. Social and recreational opportunities were strongly supported by volunteer work. This ranged from the establishment of facilities and activities, to expanding to the breadth of cultural, entertainment, and recreational opportunities. The existence of an active voluntary sector, furthermore, offers socializing opportunities, which can enhance mental health and well-being. Volunteer community supports fill gaps in provincial and other support systems, especially in terms of medical care. Furthermore, they actively advocate for community needs. In terms of community economic development, the voluntary sector has developed opportunities to diversify and promote the community and its economy. The strong voice of volunteer groups is reported to have formed representative 'go-to' entities and has influenced the focus of local policy, especially in terms of municipal encouragement for visitability and accessibility standards. The broad range of volunteers strengthens capacity and networking assets.

As Table 3.8 shows, local groups are perceived to have had a significant impact on what it is like to live in Tumbler Ridge by supporting healthy lifestyle and improved accessibility standards. A

variety of gains in community assets, medical needs responses, and social aspects were also mentioned as volunteer contributions that have improved the quality of life in Tumbler Ridge. Voluntary groups have strengthened community life in terms of diversity, cohesion, and ‘flavour’ of the community. Voluntarism offers opportunities for seniors to get involved and to make valuable contributions to other population groups.

Table 3.8 Achievements and benefits of local volunteer efforts

Enhanced health consciousness and fitness levels of residents (5)
Accessibility / safety of housing / other infrastructure (3)
Beautification (2)
Improved quality of life (2)
Medical transportation (2)
More depth and flavour of the community (2)
Socializing opportunities (2)
Attract a broader demographic (1)
Community cohesion (1)
Cultural diversity (1)
Improvements targeting seniors benefit the general population (1)
Meaningful involvement for seniors (1)
Reassurance that community / seniors’ needs are met (1)
Substance to hollow infrastructure (1)

3.3 Knowledge Transfer and Best Practices

The final part of the interview was designed to discuss what makes certain voluntary groups and leaders successful and challenges that can impede the work of seniors and voluntary groups in Tumbler Ridge. Participants identified many attributes, skills, and characteristics that made individual volunteers and community organizations effective (Table 3.9). Attitudinal and personality assets are predominant at the top of the list. Other aspects considered to be beneficial include financial support for organizations, as well as internal and external communication skills. Closely related to communication, strong organizational governance is reflected in factors such as leadership, succession planning, membership, networking, and planning. Other success factors, such as location, specific skills, and physical health, were identified as well.

Table 3.9 Volunteer success factors

Motivation / enthusiasm (6)	Follow-up (1)
Skills / experience (6)	Innovative approaches (1)
Persistence (5)	Larger memberships allows more effective allocation of tasks (1)
Energy (3)	Multiple memberships provide insights (1)
Convincing argumentation skills (2)	Patience (1)
Dedication (2)	People with wide network of contacts (1)
Determination (2)	Personality (1)
Focus / vision (2)	Physical health (1)
Genuine concern (2)	Planning (1)
Government / industry / donation support (2)	Scenery / beauty facilitates community commitment (1)
Interagency / internal collaboration (2)	Skilled navigation of bureaucracy (1)
Internal / external communication (2)	Small community size facilitates networking and communication (1)
Leadership (2)	Succession planning (1)
Long-term commitment (2)	Understanding the efforts are necessary (1)
Positive attitude (2)	
Role models (2)	
Taking the initiative (2)	
Central location of Community Centre (1)	

Finally, participants discussed challenges to supporting the work of seniors and voluntary groups in the community (Table 3.10). Such challenges included human resource issues related to the availability of volunteers, the limited availability of certain skill sets, and the increasingly transient nature of Tumbler Ridge’s population. Furthermore, organizational finances, attitudinal challenges, infrastructure, and operational barriers need attention in the continuation of Tumbler Ridge’s active voluntary sector. Barriers to voluntary sector success were connected to how people work together, how groups interact, a lack of facilities, and operational challenges that include communication, coordination, and internal conflicts of interest. Finally, policies and regulatory complications, the slow pace of change, and seniors’ personal financial situations have impacted the activities and effectiveness of voluntary groups.

Table 3.10 Barriers

<u>Human resources (12):</u> Volunteer recruitment challenges (3) Decreasing percentage of seniors' population (2) Doctor / medical staff shortage (2) High turnover among families / workers (1) Lack of grant application experience (1) Leadership and diplomacy skills (1) Mental health issues among seniors (1) Senior volunteer burnout (1) Time constraints (1) Transient town with many long-distance commuter residents (1)	<u>Infrastructure (9):</u> Lack of a facility / space limitations (6) Lack of attractions (1) Remoteness / distance to other towns (1) Service shortage (1)
<u>Organizational finances (10):</u> Funding (5) Lack of support from the Province (5)	<u>Operations (9):</u> Lacking communication / conflicts within groups (2) Lacking coordination between groups (2) Advertise volunteer opportunities more (1) Duplication (1) Individual agendas can impede group advancement (1) Lacking communication with community (1) Too much information can be confusing (1)
<u>Attitudes (9):</u> Community focus shifted back to mining / industrial development (1) Contractor attitudes against accessibility standards (1) Lacking recognition of unique circumstances of Tumbler Ridge (1) Lacking patience to work with seniors (1) Lacking recognition of volunteer efforts (1) Less community orientation among new generation of mines (1) Lack of reciprocity (1) Seniors want things done in a particular way (1) Younger people less interested in community quality of life / volunteering their time (1)	<u>Policies / regulations (5):</u> Formalities / requirements for volunteers (1) Jurisdictional issues on a regional level (1) Lacking authority of volunteer / seniors' organizations (1) Liability issues (1) Opposition from Northern Health Authority (1)
	<u>Other (1):</u> Slow pace of development / change (1)
	<u>Personal finances (1):</u> Seniors' incomes limit range of activities (1)

4.0 Summary

This report summarizes preliminary findings about the role of the voluntary sector in responding to the needs of the older population and about the role of seniors in supporting community development initiatives. Interviews with local leaders, representatives from voluntary community groups, and individual volunteers and seniors have shown that seniors' needs are clearly recognized in Tumbler Ridge. Numerous efforts are being undertaken to accommodate those needs, and the large number of voluntary groups, as well as their high levels of activity and involvement in the community and in the provision of supports, show how seniors and their needs are incorporated in community life. At the same time, the high level of seniors' involvement indicates the great extent of their contributions to meeting seniors' needs as well as their contributions to the community at large.

Developments in Tumbler Ridge have created a combination of population aging patterns, including sudden aging through retiree in-migration, as well as workforce aging in the mining sector, but also periods of influx of young working families. These population dynamics can make it difficult for local groups and service providers to strategically plan new service delivery options and investments for the diverse needs within the community. While extensive efforts have been undertaken to respond to these diverse needs, the community continues to experience challenges keeping up with change.

It will be crucial to continue to support the voluntary sector. Time and resources need to be invested in order to build voluntary sector capacity, connect groups with adequate infrastructure and resources to support their activities, and expand opportunities for these groups to fulfill their important roles in the community. With adequate support, the voluntary sector can continue to provide individuals opportunities to get involved in the community and be active in community development. While the town is experiencing demographic and economic changes, it will be important to keep seniors' needs a priority in community initiatives in order to maintain economic and social stability and to enhance local quality of life.

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Appendix 1 Interview Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

This research project examines the role that voluntary organizations, community groups and volunteers play in both supporting older people and in influencing community development in aging resource communities. The project involves interviews and focus groups with local leaders, representatives from voluntary organizations and community groups, as well as with individual volunteers and older people living in Tumbler Ridge. The primary source of information for this phase of the project is from interviews about the implications of recent population and socioeconomic change in the community, and the role of the voluntary sector in addressing the implications of these changes. **Please note that you are being asked to speak from your own personal perspective rather than on behalf of an organization.** We are asking permission to record the information so that we can transcribe your responses verbatim. The interview recording will be transcribed by a member of the research team based at UNBC. The project is based out of the UNBC Community Development Institute in collaboration with researchers at Trent University and University of Guelph in Ontario, and has been approved by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. Only members of the research team will have access to the transcribed interview.

I, _____ (please insert your name) have read the attached Letter of Information and have had all questions answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in an interview under the following conditions:

1. I understand that my involvement in the project consists of a one-on-one interview of between 45 and 60 minutes.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can refuse any question.
3. I understand that I can terminate my participation in the interview at anytime and any information provided by me to the research project will be destroyed.
4. I understand that my name and identifying information likely to identify me will not be used in any presentation or publication of the research.
5. I understand that all information from the interview will be kept in a secure location at UNBC restricted to Dr. Neil Hanlon and his research collaborators.
6. I agree that the interview can be recorded (please circle): Yes No
7. I agree that my responses may be quoted verbatim (please circle): Yes No
8. I understand that I can contact Dr. Neil Hanlon (phone: 250-960-5881, email: hanlon@unbc.ca) or the UNBC Office of Research (phone 250-960-6735, email: reb@unbc.ca) with any questions or concerns about the research project.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 2 Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Section 1 – Baseline information about population dynamics and socioeconomic change

- 1.1 How old are you?
- 1.2 How long have you lived in TR?
- 1.3 What brought you here (e.g., work, retirement, family)?
- 1.4 Are you presently working? If so, in what capacity?
- 1.5 Do you belong to local clubs, committees, associations, etc.? If so, what is your role?

Section 2 – Community dimensions of aging

- 2.1 In your opinion, is population aging an important consideration in social and community development?
- 2.2 How has population aging changed local approaches to community development?
- 2.3 Can you think of recent or past examples of local efforts targeted to local seniors?
- 2.4 Are local seniors active in community development and social planning initiatives? If so, please provide examples.
- 2.5 In your opinion, which local groups (business, government, health care, etc.) are most attuned to issues of population aging?
- 2.6 Is there anything different or special about growing older in TR? If so, please elaborate.

Section 3 – Role of voluntarism in personal and community transformation for seniors

- 3.1 Thinking about the voluntary sector (e.g., non-profit organizations, local clubs), are there individuals and groups who stand out in your mind as actively engaged in support of local seniors?
- 3.2 Are there older individuals in town who strike you as particularly active in voluntary efforts to improve community and social development in general (i.e., not necessarily geared towards services for seniors only).

Section 4 – Role of voluntarism in community transformation more generally

4.1. From your perspective, how does the work of voluntary groups and voluntary sector leaders influence community development in TR?

4.2 In what ways, if any, have the efforts of local voluntary groups changed what it is like to live in TR?

Section 5– Knowledge transfer and best practices

5.1 Can you think of examples of voluntary sector leaders or innovators who are most effective in creating positive change, getting things done?

5.2 Can you think of examples of initiatives, events, committees, groups, etc. who have been particularly good at getting things done on behalf of seniors, and community development more generally?

5.3 Thinking of these examples of effective change-makers, what are some of the factors you think are responsible for these successes?

5.4 Are there any barriers / changes needed to more effectively support the role of seniors in community development?

5.5 Do you have any further comments regarding the role of volunteering in aging resource communities?