

Study of the effect of outdoor environment on community wellbeing and visitor experience in Wakefield and Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham, Quebec

By: Kaili Munelith-Soukanh
300074448

GEG /ENV 2918 Field Camp

Professor Sonia Wesche

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University of Ottawa

1.INTRODUCTION:

The municipality of La Peche consists of nine communities: Farrellton, Alcove, Lac-des-Loups, Rupert, Lascelles, Wakefield, East- Aldfield, Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham, and Duclos (See Figure 1) (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). It is located north-west of Gatineau in the Outaouais administrative region (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham was officially founded in 1855 (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). The first residents of Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham migrated from lower Canada, and the first residents of Wakefield were Irish, Scottish, and English immigrants (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). Wakefield was officially founded in 1830 (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). The Community Wellbeing Committee (CWC) has hired Geosolutions to conduct research on the overall health of the residents, including social, physical and mental, and the way that the communities are experienced by visitors . This research will be used to compare the effects of the different outdoor environments on quality of life and experiences in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and Wakefield, then suggest ways to improve them. The following report will include the methods used to collect data, the differences and similarities of outdoor environment and their effect on wellbeing, and the outdoor environment and its effect on visitor experience in Wakefield.

2.METHODS:

In order to examine the quality of life and the overall visitor experience in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and Wakefield, we used a few different methods of data collection. To begin, we conducted background research on the two communities. This was done by discussing the history and social contexts. After the preliminary research, observation guidelines and themes were created to aid in conducting field observation. The field observations were done by travelling to Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and Wakefield. While in the communities, the infrastructure, outdoor leisure, and physical/socio-cultural opportunities were observed. The information obtained from

observing the towns were recorded in field journals which contained any ideas, questions, thoughts, problems, measurements, and solutions that occurred during field observation. The team then generated a survey (See Figure 2) regarding the overall visitor experience and how it is affected by opportunities for leisure and environmental factors in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and Wakefield. Each student in the workshop group were required to fill out the survey after visiting both of the towns and the data was then compiled. Although the research done was well executed, there were still some limitations in the methods used. These limitations occurred while collecting data in the towns and filling out the survey. While conducting the field observations we spent the morning in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and the afternoon in Wakefield. Having only a few hours in each community prevented the team from fully experiencing the towns.

Considering that both of the communities are situated along the water (See Figure 1), they base many of their outdoor activities off of watersports. With our limited time we were not able to experience these. Another limitation in regards to visitor experience was the season in which the team visited. The field observations took place in the summer on August 29th 2019; meaning that the team was not able to experience the outdoor activities that take place in the winter such as Ski Vorlage. The main limitation occurring in the survey was that it was only the workshop group filling it out. This causes there to be less diversity in the demographic portion of the survey, as well as the fact that the group is all visiting these locations for the same reason. If conducting this research again in the future, I would recommend that more time should be spent in each town, resulting in more time to observe and appreciate the actual visitor experience. I also recommend that the survey should be filled out by real visitors and residents in the town as opposed to the workshop group.

3.COMMUNITY CHARACTERIZATIONS: OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT AND WELLBEING

Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and Wakefield, Quebec, are two similar but contrasting towns. The two communities are similar in location, resources, and environment (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). They utilize a few of the same resources such as surrounding infrastructure, outdoor environment, and services (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). There were three observation categories relevant to the outdoor environment that were developed during preliminary research: natural environment, built environment, and activities. These observation guidelines were an aid in comparing the two communities.

3.1 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The natural environments in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham and Wakefield have similar aspects as they are located fairly close together. Both of the communities have vegetation and fauna representative of a temperate forest. These forests consist of a mix of deciduous and coniferous trees, with some specific areas being more coniferous than deciduous and vice versa. The town of Wakefield is located more into the Gatineau Hills, giving it a more mountainous terrain. While conducting field research, it was noted that both towns had a lot of greenspace. This greenspace has the potential to promote wellbeing depending on the way that it is utilized. The natural environment in each town was slightly altered for different uses. Wakefield used its natural environment to create hiking trails, ski hills, guided tours, etc. These activities promote physical well being as well as cultural well being; added to the fact that they take place in greenspace which has been studied to greatly improve emotional wellbeing. The greenspace in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham was more closed off to the public, and located on the property of residents. This promotes the wellbeing of the residents who own the greenspace, but not the

community as a whole, as it is more of an aesthetic feature of the town. The conservative history and nature of Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham causes a lack of emphasis in overall wellbeing; whereas the modern, open mindedness, of Wakefield causes the promotion of it. The way the towns were in the past changes where their priorities are now.

3.2 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environments of Wakefield and Masham are very contrasting. While conducting the study in Wakefield, I observed that the built environment was constructed in a way that compliments the natural environment and maintains the towns heritage. A prime example of this would be the Wakefield Mill. This flour mill was built directly on the MacLaren falls, which was used to power the mill (Wakefield Mill, 2019). Overtime, the mill was converted into the “Wakefield Mill Inn and Spa,” and deemed a heritage site (Wakefield Mill, 2019). Although the building has been renovated many times since 1838, it was always done in a way that enhances the environment around it and keeps the historical integrity of the original building (See Figure 3) (Wakefield Mill, 2019). The mill is considered the reason for the rapid growth and economic boom in Wakefield, making it a large aspect of their history and heritage (Wakefield Mill, 2019). Many of the communities buildings (restaurants, homes, general stores, etc.) , are quite old and have a specific barn-like aesthetic.(See Figure 4) The buildings constructed after these older ones were built with diligence towards keeping that aesthetic to conserve the heritage of the town. This was very evident on Chemin Riverside. The built environment in Wakefield also promotes wellbeing through adding opportunity of diverse leisure activities. The built environment of Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham, like Wakefield, was built in a way that respects the towns heritage. The town of Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham was built around a church, Paroisse Ste Cécile de Masham, (See Figure 5) situated on Rue Principale Est

(Municipality of La Peche, 2015). The community respects its heritage by leaving the church alone when expanding and building close to it (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). It was noted that due to the conservative and administrative nature of Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham practicality was the priority when considering the way Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham is experienced by residents and visitors. The religious presence is very evident in other aspects of the built environment besides the church. Majority of schools observed in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham were catholic schools. The community still uses the church as a centre and gathering place for the entire town, as it did in the past, which plays a huge role in the community, social, and cultural wellbeing while staying true to the heritage (Municipality of La Peche, 2015). There were not many aspects of the built environment in Masham that encouraged physical or emotional wellbeing as the town was composed of mainly administrative buildings and homes; but this has recently changed as they have added in a rock climbing gym, hinting towards future construction to enhance physical and emotional wellbeing .

3.3 ACTIVITIES IN THE OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT

There was a large difference in the diversity and abundance of activities in Wakefield and Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham. Activities in the outdoor environment are a huge factor in promoting well being. These activities can be divided into three categories to aid with observation: physical, social, and cultural.

3.3.1 PHYSICAL

The richness and diversity of activities that promote physical wellbeing was much greater in Wakefield than in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham. While conducting field research I noted that the outdoor environment promoted physical wellbeing. The physical activities are dependant on the topography of Wakefield. There are activities that take place in the mountainous areas such as

hiking, skiing, and snowboarding ; or activities that revolve around the waterfront such as water skiing, boating, or fishing. I observed a lack of these mountainous activities in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham. due to the topography being very flat, as well as most of the waterfront being part of the private property of the residents in the area I observed. In further areas of Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham. there are beaches and campgrounds.

3.3.2 SOCIAL

Wakefield and Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham both had opportunities for social activity. While observing Wakefield, I noted that there was an abundance of social leisure activities. These activities include: restaurants, shops, bars, a community centre, etc. Having all of these activities in the community work to promote social well being, as well as a sense of community. Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham had few opportunities for social leisure including gatherings at the church, and very few restaurants. The difference in opportunity between the two towns is due to Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham being more resident and administrative based whereas Wakefield is geared towards tourists.

3.3.3 CULTURAL

While conducting the study, It was observed that cultural leisure activities in the two towns was very different in terms of the type of activity and the amount of them. As Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham is a town based off of religion, their main activity regarding their culture is Mass and community gatherings at the church. In Wakefield, their cultural activities in the outdoor environment include: performance arts, music festivals, heritage tours, etc. These cultural activities in the outdoor environment contribute to the sense of community that the visitors and residents experience. The difference in the diversity and options for cultural

activities in the outdoor environment are due to the audience that each town is targeting.

Wakefield enhancing the experience of its visitors and tourists whereas Masham is thinking of its residents.

4.COMMUNITY FOCUS: OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE

_____The Community Well Being Committee (CWC) has shown concern in regards to the visitor experience in Wakefield, Quebec. To determine whether the community has a positive or negative affect on the visitors, Geosolutions must first observe the general visitor experience of Wakefield. The visitor experience was studied through the creation of a preliminary survey, conducting field observations, and going to Wakefield; while focusing on the main interests of the CWC on the tourist experience.

4.1 OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT AND WELL BEING

The first question asked by the committee was , “How well does the outdoor environment support well being?”. Question 13 in the preliminary survey (See Figure 2) asked the visitors, “ How satisfied were you with the condition of the outdoor space in the community? On a scale of 1-5; 1 being very unsatisfied; and 5 being very satisfied.(See Figure 6)” The results of the survey indicate that 64.7% of the visitors who participated in the survey were very satisfied with the outdoor space in the community (See Figure 6). The other 35.3% of survey participants answered satisfied or neutral (See Figure 6). These percentages are indicative of a fairly satisfying outdoor environment, where the satisfaction contributes to improving well being. When conducting the field observations for Wakefield, one of the first things I noticed was the presence of greenspace all around the community. The preservation of greenspace puts an emphasis on the mental well being of its visitors, as well as its residents. It was also noted that the collection of restaurants,

stores, and cafes along Chemin Riverside, and seeing other visitors and residents, strengthens the sense of community and increases the overall community well being.

4.2 OUTDOOR LEISURE: PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL

The second aspect of visitor of experience that the CWC is interested in is the opportunity for outdoor leisure activity. This includes physical, social, and cultural leisure activity. The preliminary survey (See Figure 2) asked demographic based questions to observe how important leisure activities are to the visitors of Wakefield. This indicated that everyone has different priorities when it comes to leisure, and there should be more options than less. There were more questions on the survey regarding leisure activities ; but focused more on the natural environment. The results indicated that: people visiting Wakefield spent on average 5-7 hours in the outdoors (See Figure 6). The aspects that were most enjoyed in the outdoors were the hiking trails, the waterfall, and the waterfront (See Figure 6). Based off of field observations, Wakefield has an abundance of opportunities for outdoor leisure activities. Some physical leisure activities that are offered in Wakefield include hiking, skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, waterfront sports, etc. Social leisure activities were also offered in the community such as the community centre, restaurants, bars, cafes, stores, etc. Some cultural leisure activities that occur in Wakefield are the visitation of heritage sites, such as the Wakefield Mill and the Covered Bridge, music festivals, concerts, performance arts, etc. These activities increase the overall visitor wellbeing. They encourage people to spend more time outside in the environment, learn about the heritage and culture of the community, and share experiences with other residents or visitors. The availability of these activities is very important getting visitors to engage in the community and participate. That being said, the CWC wants to know how available these leisure activities are.

4.3 ACCESSIBILITY/ AVAILABILITY OF OUTDOOR LEISURE ACTIVITIES

The preliminary survey (See Figure 2) asked questions regarding the availability and accessibility of the activities. The survey found that the visitors were able to easily access the information regarding community leisure activities (question 9)(See Figure 6); and that the leisure activities that were offered catered to diverse age groups (question 11)(See Figure 6). The results of question 15 and 16 indicate that visitors did not feel limited in their outdoor experiences, and 75% of the visitors who participated in the survey felt satisfied by the diversity of recreation options (See Figure 6).

4.4 UNDER REPRESENTED/ MISSING ELEMENTS

Throughout the study of outdoor character and its relation to a positive visitor experience in Wakefield, there were some elements that were noted to be under represented or missing. During the field observations, I noticed a fairly high number of churches throughout Wakefield ,such as the Holy Trinity and Eglise La Peche, but I did not see any mosques, temples, synagogues, or monasteries. Visitors of Wakefield who practice a religion other than Christianity may want access to a place of worship, and feel excluded if there is none. A few more missing elements were frequent road signs/ crosswalk paintings, and convenient public transportation. Being a visitor and being unfamiliar with the area can be very challenging to navigate. Doing so without road signs or crosswalk paintings is even harder. During field observation I noted the lack of public transportation as well. The lack of signage can greatly lower visitor experience as getting lost is an overall unpleasant experience.

4.5 COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

Although the potential for enhancement in Wakefield is present, it is not urgent or completely necessary. Wakefield has stayed true to its heritage in terms of aesthetic and

infrastructure design. It was noted during field observation that the roads and sidewalks had looked quite run down. This could be due to their age or the extreme flooding that Wakefield has experienced in past years. Some subtle enhancement could be done by re-paving roads or sidewalks, the addition of more frequent street signage, and more frequent public transportation. In the preliminary survey, there were questions asked regarding improvement recommendations to the community. The visitors recommended more advertisements or signage for activities that go on in the town (See Figure 6). When asked if there were outdoor activities that should be added or improved, the most common answers were: watersport rentals (kayaks, paddleboards, canoes), swimming, guided tours, and more activities geared towards younger people (See Figure 6). These activities would promote physical and emotional well being while using the natural environment. One main accessibility issue that the participants of the survey noted were the lack of wheelchair ramps in Wakefield (See Figure 6). If enhancements were to be made, I believe that this would be a priority.

4.6 CONTINUATION OF RESEARCH

The next steps in continuing the research would be to create an environmental impact assessment on the changes. Once this is done the changes would be applied to Wakefield. The changes and visitor experiences of them would need to be monitored over a longer span of time, to determine whether these changes were successful in improving the visitor experience, and even resident experience.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Community Well Being Committee (CWC) had expressed concerns in the effect of the outdoor environment on the visitor experience and health of the residents in the La Peche

Municipality. In order to find ways to enhance the outdoor environment, the CWC hired Geosolutions to conduct general studies in Wakefield and Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham, Quebec. From the studies, it is recommended that the CWC enhance small aspects of the municipal infrastructure such as: repave roads and sidewalks, add clearer and more frequent signage, and increase the amount of public transportation offered. A preliminary survey was created to get the opinions of visitors. According to the survey results (See Figure 6), there should be more opportunities for watersport rentals in Wakefield, including kayaks, canoes, and paddle boards. The survey also revealed that although the availability/accessibility of leisure activities was quite good, there should be more advertisements for them; as well as more activities geared towards younger age groups. An important change that should be made to the communities is the addition of wheelchair ramps. Overall, the outdoor environment in Wakefield was successful in creating a very positive visitor experience and improve wellbeing. In Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham, the outdoor environment did not contribute to a positive very good visitor experience or greatly enhance overall wellbeing. If looking to improve these aspects of Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham, the CWC should use Wakefield as a model. Many more leisure activities such as restaurants, parks, stores, etc. should be added to improve the overall health of the residents and visitor experience in Sainte-Cécile-de-Masham.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

While conducting the study, there were a few limitations that had to be overcome. The limitations were: time spent in the field, small demographic of participants of the survey, and season. The limited time was conducting preliminary and post field research to expand on what we had time to observe in the towns, as well as to learn about what we did not get to experience due to it being summer. The demographic limitation in the survey participants was overcome by

being diligent towards taking into consideration the other groups of demographics and how they would have experienced the towns.

6. REFERENCES

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7. APPENDICES



Figure 1 Map of La Peche Municipality

GROUP 01 - Survey

1. How old are you?

- a. <18
- b. 18-25
- c. 26-35
- d. 36-45
- e. 46-55
- f. >55

2. What gender do you identify with?

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Non-binary
- d. Prefer not to specify

3. Which languages do you primarily speak at home (select all that apply)?

- a. English
- b. French
- c. Other (please specify) _____

4. How long is your visit?

- a. Less than 1 day
- b. 1 to 3 days
- c. 1 week
- d. More than 1 week

4. What best describes the reason for your visit (select all that apply)?

- a. Business
- b. Leisure and recreation
- c. Visiting family/friends
- d. Education
- e. Medical
- f. Organised activity/event (guided tour, sporting event, concert, etc.; specify) _____
- g. Other (please specify) _____

5. Where is your permanent residence located?

- a. La Pêche
- b. Elsewhere in MRC des Collines de l'Outaouais
- c. Ottawa/Gatineau area
- d. Other location in Canada (please specify) _____
- e. Other location outside Canada (please specify) _____

6. Who are you travelling with (select all that apply)?

- a. Alone
- b. Partner/spouse
- c. Other adult family members
- d. Kids
- e. Colleague
- f. Dogs
- g. Other (please specify) _____

7. How important are the following leisure activities in your daily life?

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| a. Physical activity/sports | Very unimportant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very important |
| b. Performance arts | Very unimportant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very important |
| c. Heritage and culture | Very unimportant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very important |
| d. Social clubs | Very unimportant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very important |
| e. Other (please specify) | Very unimportant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very important |

8. Where did you find information about leisure activities in the community (select all that apply)?

- a. Internet
- b. Pamphlets, billboards
- c. Information centre
- d. Word of mouth
- e. Guidebook
- f. Signage
- g. Not applicable

9. How satisfied were you with the availability of information regarding leisure activities in the community?

Very unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very satisfied

10. Do you have any suggestions for improvement? _____

11. To what degree do the available activities cater to a diversity of age groups?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much

Explain _____

12. On average how many hours a day did you spend outside?

- a. Less than 1
- b. 1 to less than 3
- c. 3 to less than 5
- d. 5 to less than 7
- e. 7 to less than 10
- f. 10 or more

13. How satisfied were you with the condition of the outdoor space in the community?
Very unsatisfied 1 2 3 4 5 Very satisfied
14. What features/aspects of the outdoor environment did you most appreciate? List up to 3.
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
15. Did you experience or identify any limitations to participating in outdoor activities?
a. No
b. Yes (please specify) _____
16. Were you satisfied with the diversity of options for recreation?
a. Yes
b. No
17. What other outdoor activities do you think this community should have? _____

18. What infrastructure did you use during your visit (select all that apply)?
a. Park
b. Hiking trails
c. Cycling trails
d. Ski hill
e. Shops
f. Restaurants
g. Lodging
h. Hospital
i. Community centre
j. Other (please specify) _____
19. Did experience or identify any accessibility issues or challenges during you visit?
a. No
b. Yes (please specify) _____

20. To what degree does the development of the town compliment the natural environment in terms of:
a. functionality? Not at all Somewhat Very much
b. aesthetics? Not at all Somewhat Very much
21. How likely are you to recommend visiting the community to others?
Very unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 Very likely

Figure 2 Preliminary Survey Questions



Figure 3 Wakefield Inn and Spa



Figure 4 A house on Chemin Riverside



Figure 5 Paroisse Sainte Cécile de Masham

Survey	Community	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q4 again	Q5
	WAKE/MASH	a-f	a-d	a-c (+text)	a-d	a-g (+text)	a-e (+text)
1	WAKE	d	a	a	a	b d	c
2		b	b	c Chinese	a	b d	c
3	WAKE	b	a	c Mandarin	a	b f guided to	d Montreal
4		b	b	a	a	d f Hendrick	d Brampton,
5	WAKE	b	b	a	a	d f Tour with	c
6	WAKE	b	b	a	a	b d f guided	c
7	WAKE	b	a	a	a	d	c
8	WAKE	b	a	a b	a	b d f	d Chatham, C
9	WAKE	b	b		a	d	c
10	WAKE	b	a	a b	a	d	c
11	WAKE	b	a	a	a	d	d Oshawa, C
12	WAKE	b	a	a	a	d	d Oakville, C
13	WAKE	b	b	a	a	b d	c
14	WAKE	b	a	a	a	d f guided to	c
15	WAKE	b	a	a b	a	d f guided to	c
16	WAKE	b	a	a	a	d	c
17	WAKE	b	a	b	a	d	b

Q6	Q7a	Q7b	Q7c	Q7d	Q7e	Q8	Q9	Q10
a-f (+text)	int	int	int	int	int (+text)	a-g	int	text
e	3	2	4	4		b c	4	weather proof outdoor "bulletin board" s
g classmates	4	2	3	2		b d	2	It seemed that there are only a few plac
g students	3	3	4	4		g	4	Have more advertisements around in ord
e	5	2	3	4		b d f	4	More directional guides to the popular to
e	5	3	4	4		b d f	4	More acitivities for younger people
g school group	5	3	2	4		b	4	A designated swimming area in the Gati
g friends	2	5	5	1		f	3	Use more signs for leisure activity
g peers	5	1	3	4		b d	3	N/A
b g fellow stud	4	2	3	2		b d f	4	Since the majority of volunteers are retir
b g students in	3	4	3	2	5 eating	g	4	
g classmates	4	2	4	4		b	4	
g student class	5	3	5	2		b c d	5	Need to be more accessible for disability
g class	4	2	3	3		d	5	
e	5	5	3	3		b f	3	There could have been more signs or adv
e g school peer	5	3	3	3		b f	4	They could have an information stand in
g class mates	2	2	4	5		b d	4	I only saw the signage in this area in Ott
g other student	4	5	3	3	4 visual arts	b	4	I found a lot of pamphlets inside building

7.1.1 Outdoor environment and community wellbeing/visitor experience (Masham)

- Primarily residential and administrative
- Very tight knit community
- Limited options for leisure activities
- Very strong religious presence, specifically Catholic
- Limited road signage, crosswalks, wheelchair ramps

7.1.2 Recommendations for improvement (Masham)

- Addition of more road signs, crosswalks, and wheelchair ramps
- Addition of more options for leisure activities such as restaurants, cafes, parks, shops, etc.
- Enhancement of greenspace for visitor use
- More access to the waterfront for leisure activities

7.1.3 Outdoor environment and community wellbeing/visitor experience (Wakefield)

- Abundance of greenspace
- Many options for leisure activities
- Geared towards tourists
- Lacks frequent signage, wheelchair ramps, and crosswalks
- Not much access to water sport activities

7.1.4 Recommendations for improvement (Wakefield)

- Addition of more frequent road signs, wheelchair ramps, and crosswalks
- Rentals for water sport equipment (kayaks, canoes, etc.)
- Increased advertisement for local activities
- Activities geared towards younger age groups