Background and Relevance
In the Canadian Paralympic Committee’s (CPC) 2014 strategic framework document, ‘Forward with Purpose’, the CPC suggests that Canada can be the world’s leading Paralympic nation by 2022 (CPC, 2014). Interorganizational relationships (IORs) have been identified as an important mechanism for building capacity within parasport organizations in order to help them realize goals, fulfill their mandates, and achieve event legacy goals (Carlisi, 2016). However, no studies to date have specifically examined the nature and role of ongoing IORs in the grassroots parasport context. This remains a large gap in the parasport and IOR literatures, limiting our understanding of capacity building below the national and provincial levels.

A growing body of research is exposing the antecedents, processes, attributes, and outcomes of interorganizational relationships at the community or grassroots level (e.g., Jones et al., 2017; Misener & Doherty 2013, 2014; Parent & Harvey, 2017). Collectively, the research demonstrates compelling ways that IORs can contribute to competitive advantage through building an interactive network of dependable partners. One study done by Wicker and Breuer (2014) looked at multi-sport clubs who offer disabled sport and suggested that these clubs have “significantly more relationships with other institutions in the community than their statistical twins” (p.26) and that collaborations with diverse partners were considered beneficial and therefore recommended for disability sport providers. Other research calls for specific examination of the unique strengths and challenges embedded in managerial functions within parasport contexts (e.g., McPherson et al., 2017; Misener & Darcy, 2014), although the various dimensions of partnership management and purported outcomes in this context remain unknown.

Purpose and Framing of the Study
In order to address this gap in the literature, the purpose of this study is to advance our understanding of the role of IORs by exploring the elements that are critical to maintaining and enhancing the relationships between grassroots parasport organizations and those external to the clubs. This study will also examine the further relationship outcomes that ultimately contribute to the capacity of grassroots parasport organizations to fulfill their mandates. Three research questions are used to guide the study: 1) Who are the central organizational partners for community parasport organizations? 2) What are the key elements of the relationship process in this context? 3) How do IORs advance the organizational goals of community parasport organizations?

The study draws on Misener and Doherty's (2013) study of IOR processes and outcomes in the community sport context. Specifically, they identified four key attributes of relationship quality: engagement, balance, trust, and consistency and three key relationship management competencies: interpersonal, conceptual, and technical. Their study also revealed specific deliverables and areas of impact (program/service quality, operations, and community presence) that resulted from IORs within community sport. These findings offer an "idea context" for the study and provide concepts to inform the investigation and further explore (Ravitch & Riggan, 2011).

Method
A sample of grassroots parasport organizations in Ontario that specifically serve para-athletes were identified from the ‘club finder’ source on Parasport Ontario’s webpage. A total of 27 clubs were identified across different sports. Club presidents were then emailed and asked to participate in a phone interview, as they have presumed expert knowledge of their organization’s IOR and capacity issues. Semi-structured interviews are currently being conducted to understand the IOR process and outcomes in grassroots parasport clubs based on an interview guide developed from key themes in the literature (e.g., Misener & Doherty, 2013). Interviews are being transcribed verbatim and all are expected to be complete by mid-November 2017. It is anticipated that approximately 13-15 clubs will participate in the study. Data is being collected and analyzed through an interactive process of constant comparison and multi-stage coding (Charmaz, 2006). As analysis proceeds, data will be managed using NVIVO to promote transparency and effective data management.
Preliminary Findings/Discussions
Preliminary findings indicate that parasport organizations are connected to an average of twelve partners across nonprofit, public, and commercial sectors, which is significantly more than their able-bodied counterparts, who typically have seven partners (Misener & Doherty, 2013; Wicker & Breuer, 2014).

Early analysis reveals that the relationship process is characterized by consistency, balance, and trust and that interpersonal communication skills are paramount for the board members who are managing partnerships within parasport clubs in order to initiate and secure the desired relationships (e.g. facility providers, sponsors and other clubs). In contrast, the relationship process may be impeded by bureaucracy and exhaustive formal processes and lack of awareness among partners about parasport values and programs vs. mainstream (non-parasport) club offerings. The specific deliverables associated with IORs includes physical, financial, and human resources, and accreditation. These deliverables further impact the clubs by improving their program and service quality, increasing the club's community presence, improved operations, and enhanced athlete recruitment. Notably, clubs also discuss areas of club operations and management where they feel they lack partnerships and would like to strengthen their engagement with new partners, including relationships with rehabilitation centres or school boards for athlete recruitment, and the attraction of more sponsorships.

Contributions
The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on IORs and provide insight into the process and outcomes of IORs in grassroots parasport organizations. The findings are expected to benefit parasport practitioners and volunteers by providing important insight that can be used to initiate or enhance relationships in this context.