

Recreation and Sport Systems

RS102: Get to Know Your Community

Revised Overview

RS102 - Get to Know Your Community was designed and prepared for Recreation North by Wendy Lahey with input from Caroline Sparks. Development was funded by the Arctic Inspiration Prize. Revisions for Program delivery were made by Caroline Sparks.

Description:

RS102 encourages leaders to get to know their communities well. Knowing how the system works, and understanding local people, context and culture, helps ensure meaningful, inclusive and accessible community recreation.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify different ways to get to know a community.
- Describe some of the characteristics that are usually considered in community recreation.
- Discuss strategies that respond to local characteristics and contribute to inclusive, accessible and meaningful recreation.

Required Learning Activities:

- RLA: Research Room Profile
- RLA: Campfire Chat Profile

Week 1:

Whether recreation leaders grow up in the community where they are now working, or are new to the community, a solid understanding of the community helps ensure that recreation is meaningful, relevant, inclusive and accessible.

What do leaders need to know? How do they find this information? In Week 1, some of the 'facts and stats' that are helpful to know are introduced through a 'Research Room' approach. This approach seeks information from profiles, plans, maps, demographics, etc. that is usually compiled by governments.

Key teaching points:

- Recreation leaders who connect what they know about the system (RS101) to their knowledge of the local community (RS102) are better able to support recreation that is relevant to the North (RS103) and inclusive of all community members.
- Getting to know a community better involves figuring out what you want or need to know, how to get and present that information, and why this is important.
- To really understand a community requires some basic facts and stats, but also a deeper understanding of community values, traditions, relationships, etc.
- There are a wide range of facts and stats about communities (e.g. demographics and physical characteristics). Physical characteristics include the built environment and infrastructure as well as the natural and surrounding environment.
- Recreation leaders may want to get to know their community better when:
 - They are new to the community
 - They want to take stock of how things are going
 - When there has been a shift or change in the community
 - When it feels like the same old thing—it's time for a change
- Recreation leaders may want to prepare a community profile when:
 - Support is needed from community, elected officials, funders, other sectors, etc.
 - Submitting a grant or funding application
 - A request to increase and/or sustain resources needs to be justified.

Reflective questions to encourage learning:

- What is one thing about your community you would like to know more about?
- As a recreation leader, when might you want to get to know your community better?
- Where can you get information about your community?
- Describe when a recreation leader might prepare and/or use a community profile.

- Discuss how we can gather information respectfully about our communities.

Week 2:

Community statistics and facts help recreation leaders gain a basic understanding of their community. However, community's personality is deeper than its 'facts and stats' and is reflected in values, local culture, family and social relationships, and patterns of community participation. This type of "getting to know" requires time, patience, and an open-mind.

Recreation leaders who spend time getting to know their community at both levels, are better positioned to ensure recreation is meaningful, relevant, and inclusive.

Key teaching points:

- In the North, recreation leaders often get to know their community through informal sources; the people you talk to at the grocery store, the kids in the playground, the Elders having tea. This type of knowledge provides a rich context for ensuring recreation is meaningful, inclusive and accessible.
- Getting to know a community's personality by building connections and relationships with community members, can help engage people in recreation as participants and as volunteers. For leaders who are not from the community, it can help them learn about local culture, traditions and protocols.
- Each person will choose to learn about their community in ways that feel most comfortable. Encourage learners to push themselves outside their comfort zone as this is when they are more likely to connect with people who are they may not otherwise connect with and/or people who do not currently participate in recreation.
- The Framework for Recreation in Canada reads, "More than any other service, recreation has the ability to reach all citizens, and to bring people together in a non-threatening, pleasurable atmosphere. However, a rebalancing of recreation is necessary if it is to strategically address the barriers and constraints to participation faced by some people, and to celebrate the rich diversity of Canada's population." If there is an opportunity, encourage learners to explore what "rebalancing of recreation" means and how they can "re-balance" recreation in their communities.

Reflective questions to encourage learning:

- How do you get to know your whole community?
- Reflect on what you learned about your community. Is there anything you learned that surprised you?
- What might you do differently now that you know your community better?
- What are some strategies we can use to help to make recreation more welcoming, easy to participate in, meaningful, and relevant to local culture?

Required Learning Activity: Research Room

Complete by: Sunday after first conference call

In this activity, you will look for 'facts and stats' about your community and share a few of these that affect local recreation opportunities.

For example:

- 50% of the population is under the age of 25. Programs for children and youth are important.
 - There is a high rate of unemployment. We need more programs during the day.
1. To begin, use slides #9 to 12 to review different types of factual information.
 2. Choose sources and questions to research your community from Activity #1 (or find/create your own).
 3. In a forum post, share a few of the 'facts and stats' you found AND explain how these influence (or should influence) local recreation.

Questions about demographics:

- What is your community's population?
- What are the age groupings in the population? Are there more young people?
- Describe ethnicity in your community. Are most people Indigenous? Are there newcomers to Canada?
- What language(s) are spoken?
- What are the average levels of income?
- What are the main sources of employment?
- What is the unemployment rate?
- Up to what grade is public school available?

Questions about community environments:

- What is/are the local government/s?
- What recreation facilities are there in your community?
- Are there good roads, sidewalks, trails?
- What public institutions (school, hospital) and public places (church, hall) are in your community?
- What types of businesses are there?
- What drives the local economy?
- On what traditional territory is your community located?
- What is the climate like?
- What is the land like around your community (mountains, lakes, forests, tundra)?
- What concerns for safety are there?
- How do people mostly travel on the land or in the bush?

Required Learning Activity: Campfire Chat

Complete by: Sunday after 2nd conference call

NOTE: You may want to start this activity early as it asks you to connect with a few community members.

Community conversations (campfire chats) help leaders get to know their communities better. This activity involves a conversation with a community member about inclusive, accessible and meaningful recreation.

1. Review slides 18-20 and the informal approaches introduced in Activity #4.
2. Choose a couple of questions to help you with the conversation. Use questions from the list below or create your own.
3. Ask an Elder, a long-time resident, a friend, or another person for a few minutes of their time. Explain this is a required activity for some training you are taking.
4. Ask your questions to explore the person's recreation perspectives and stories. Be sure to thank them for their time.
5. Using your own style, explain in a forum post...
 - what you learned without including names or personal details, and
 - ways that recreation is or can be inclusive, accessible and meaningful.

Suggested Questions

- How did you participate in recreation as a child? What were your favorite activities? Did you choose recreation that was structured and organized or did you prefer free play?
- As a teenager, what were your recreation and sport experiences like?
- Have you always felt included and welcome in programs and at events?
- Were there things that made it easy to you to participate in recreation?
- Were there things that made it difficult to participate in recreation? Did these barriers change as you got older?
- How did your family and culture influence your recreation experiences?
- How has your recreation changed since you were younger? What is different?
- What are the biggest barriers to participating in recreation in our community? How can we reduce these?
- What can we do to encourage people to recreate—either on their own or in organized programs and events?

Resources:

Nunavut:

- Nunavut community profiles - www.gov.nu.ca/information/community-profiles
- Nunavut Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) community profiles - www.buildingnunavut.com/en/communityprofiles/communityprofiles.asp
- Nunavut Bureau of Statistics - www.stats.gov.nu.ca/en/home.aspx

NWT:

- NWT Bureau of Statistics Community Data - www.statsnwt.ca/community-data/index.html

Yukon:

- Yukon Community Profiles - www.yukoncommunities.yk.ca/
- Yukon First Nations - www.cyfn.ca/nations/

Others:

Please note that these links are online maps and may not open well in communities where Internet is limited.

- Native Land Map (worldwide) - <https://native-land.ca/>
- Inuit Nunangat Map - www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/Map/irs/mp/index-en.html
- First Nation Profiles Interactive Map - <http://fnpim-cippn.aadnc-aadnc.gc.ca/index-eng.html>

References

Canadian Parks and Recreation Association/Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Council (February 2015). A Framework for Recreation in Canada - 2015 - Pathways to Wellbeing. Ottawa: Canadian Recreation and Parks Association. 40 pages. www.cpra.ca/about-the-framework

Community Tool Box. (2018). Section 2. Understanding and Describing the Community. Center for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. Retrieved from: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en>