



MODULE 13

BOARD GOVERNANCE





MODULE 13 OUTCOME:

*Recreation leaders support the functions
of volunteer boards.*

MODULE 13 – BOARD GOVERNANCE

13.1 Introduction to Boards

13.2 The Role and Function of Recreation Boards

13.3 Roles and Responsibilities

13.4 Board Relationships

13.5 Providing Direction

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Understand how volunteer boards are structured and how they function.
- Be familiar with the responsibilities, roles and skills of a board and its members.
- Recognize the unique role of recreation boards in Yukon communities.
- Understand how to foster effective staff and board relationships.

13.1 INTRODUCTION TO BOARDS

Module 11 - Working with Groups and Partnerships (mod11) explained the types, structures and processes related to working with community groups. The Board Governance Module focuses on the formalized structure and functions of nonprofit boards. Governance is about leadership and involves providing overall direction as well as making and implementing sound operational and financial decisions. Therefore, board governance concerns the way a volunteer board provides leadership for community recreation.

In Yukon, nonprofit boards are incorporated under the *Societies Act (url70)*. Their legal names must include “association”, “club”, “society”, etc.

Boards can be structured in different ways. This framework influences the relationships between the board, organization and senior staff. Three main types of board structures are described in the *Community Recreation Handbook for Northern Saskatchewan (pdf12-14)* (Frank, 2010)

- A governance board provides oversight, leaving management to a senior staff (e.g. Chief Executive Officer or Executive Director). They are typically associated with large organizations.
- A policy board provides direction for operations designating responsibility for carrying out rules (policies) to an executive director or senior staff. Policy boards make major decisions (e.g. approval of the annual budget, strategic planning).
- Operational boards are usually associated with small, community-based organizations whose members govern and carry out the work. Community groups are most likely operational boards.

In the case of governance and policy boards, the board delegates responsibility to the most senior person (e.g. recreation director, executive director, etc.) for operations. This senior employee directs staff and volunteers to implement the board’s direction and the priorities described in strategic plans and/or annual budgets. Annual work plans include detailed actions and timeframes to help staff and volunteers implement these priorities and serve as a useful guide for reporting back to the board on their progress.

Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (url96) has published an excellent resource, *Women on Boards: A Guide to Getting Involved*, to encourage women to take on leadership roles by volunteering as a board member.

13.2 THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF RECREATION BOARDS

Recreation boards or recreation advisory committees are present in most Yukon communities. In some cases, the local authority for recreation is the First Nation who may or may not have a designated committee. Typically, these boards comprise a cross-section of community members who are nominated by a local council (municipal or First Nation government) or who are, in unincorporated communities, elected.

Recreation boards may be operational or advisory. Advisory boards can provide feedback and make recommendations to the recreation director and/or council. Operational boards carry out activities and may have authority from council for spending. *Module 2 - Yukon Sport and Recreation System (mod2)* explains these boards may also administer annual funding (i.e. Community Lotteries Program grant).

The main functions of a recreation board in Yukon may include some or all of the following depending on whether the board represents an incorporated, unincorporated or First Nation community.

1. Describe the purpose, goals and objectives, and develop specific policies and plans, for community recreation delivery.
2. Ensure quality recreation services.
3. Promote public awareness of recreation.
4. Liaise with government authorities regarding community recreation needs and services.
5. Develop a system of financial control for recreation budgeting.
6. Operate and maintain facilities.
7. Evaluate staff and programs.
8. Provide direction and leadership to recreation staff.
9. Facilitate communication with local groups.
10. Develop policies and procedures for use of local facilities.
11. Work with the local Chief and Council to establish clear communication regarding recreation delivery.

The Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association's *First Nations Recreation Board Development Manual (pdf68)* is a resource for the development and operations of recreation boards in First Nations communities.

13.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A recreation board is a unit of individual members established for the specific purpose of community recreation development. Board members are volunteers who are responsible for the operations of their organization.

By law, the board is legally responsible and accountable for the operations and resources of the organization over which they govern. When individuals agree to serve as volunteer board members, they accept a legal and ethical responsibility to act in the best interests of the board and organization. *Women on Boards; A Guide to Getting Involved* ([url97](#)) provides an excellent overview of the legal responsibilities of board members on pages 23 to 25.

In Yukon, the directors of local recreation boards are responsible to:

- Develop the annual recreation budget and apply for funding.
- Assign recreation grant funding (e.g. Community Lotteries grants).
- Assist the recreation director with major fundraising projects.
- Volunteer for community events.
- Develop policy and negotiate funding agreements.

Individual members serving on recreation boards are expected to:

- Attend and participate in regular board meetings. An active and healthy board requires members to share opinions and values, bring information from the community to the board, and participate in decision-making.
- Understand the scope of authority as a board member, and become familiar with the board's constitution and constitution, bylaws, purpose, goals and policies.
- Be informed, making sure sufficient information is available and the context is understood before making decisions.
- Engage the community ensuring citizens are informed and have the opportunity to participate in planning and delivering recreation.
- Emphasize community strengths (e.g. current recreation opportunities, successful events and programs). Be positive and optimistic regarding community recreation.
- Be available to the recreation director for advice and consultation.



13.4 BOARD RELATIONSHIPS

Recreation strengthens community and builds a sense of belonging, pride and spirit. The recreation board members and staff are role models. The way in which they present the purpose and benefits of recreation, and how they engage community members, sets a standard for how citizens get involved and accept ownership for their community.

In any community there are strong personalities. Individuals serve on boards because they are passionate and have a strong belief in the organization's activities. Although these volunteers are enthusiastic and energetic, their opinions sometimes extend beyond the scope of the board's responsibilities to advise, recommend, listen and support. Conflict can arise, particularly around the board's authority to give direction to staff and volunteers. It is important to clarify the relationships and line of authority between staff and board members. Any conflict should be resolved in private and discussions should be confidential.

A key goal for recreation directors and recreation boards is to foster relationships within the community and encourage people to work together for quality of life. The interaction between the recreation director and board members determines the tone for the community. These relationships set the stage for working together to achieve the benefits of recreation. Good work does not happen in isolation, but is accomplished through collaboration, commitment and dedication.

In order to foster positive working relationships, board members and staff need to:

- Clearly define and agree upon each other's roles and the expectations that accompany these responsibilities.
- Develop a strong sense of trust and respect for the value of each other's roles.
- Establish open and honest communication.
- Recognize that their combined efforts lead to better outcomes for their community.
- Demonstrate agreement that recreation contributes significant individual, community, environmental and economic benefits.

13.5 PROVIDING DIRECTION

Recognizing that recreation provides multiple pathways to well-being for individuals, communities, and for our built and natural environments, Ministers for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation endorsed [*A Framework for Recreation in Canada; Pathways to Wellbeing \(pdf1\)*](#) in February 2015. Development of the Framework was a collaborative effort of provincial and territorial governments, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, and the provincial/territorial partner associations. Members of Yukon Recreation Boards should familiarize themselves with the Framework's vision and goals as these will provide a foundation for reflection, discussion and the development of their own community's action plans.

Several other resources offer direction and guidance to recreation boards.

[*The HR Council's Toolkit \(url94\)*](#) offers a range of resources and information to support effective development and functioning of boards. The Toolkit addresses human resource planning, risk management, hiring senior staff, performance appraisal of senior staff, human resource policies and employment legislation.

[*The Muttart Foundation \(url98\)*](#) offers a number of workbooks that support nonprofit and charitable organizations to develop and operate healthy and effective boards.

- Board Building: Recruiting and Developing Effective Boards
- Drafting and Revising Bylaws
- Developing Job Descriptions for Board Members
- Hiring and Performance Appraisal of the Executive Director
- Financial Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards
- Legal and Ethical Duties of Directors of Not-for-Profit Organizations:
Organizing Your Corporate Documents

THE 2015 FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATION IN CANADA

Vision

Everyone engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences, that foster:

Individual Wellbeing	Wellbeing of Natural & Built Environments	Community Wellbeing
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Values

Public Good	Inclusion & Equity	Sustainability
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Principles of Operation

Lifelong Participation	Outcome-Driven	Quality & Relevance	Evidence-Based	Partnerships	Innovation
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Goals



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