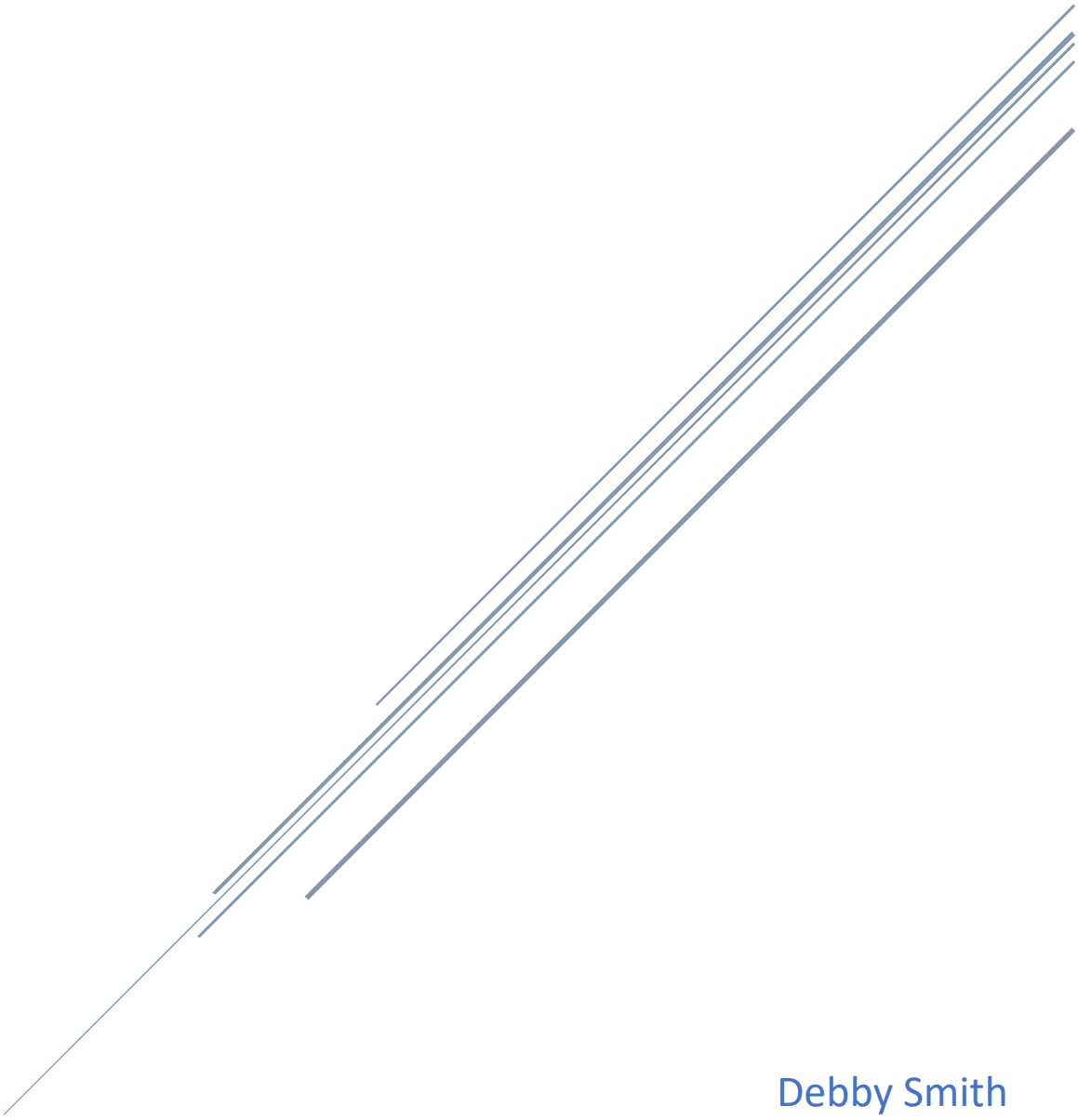
What work has Recreation Nova Scotia and its predecessors been called upon to do: A historical perspective



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INTRODUCTION

In January 2023, RNS invited 5 retired professionals, all former Board members and Executive Directors, to meet with the Board to discuss aspects of past work of the association dating back to its formation in 1998. The guests were quick to remind the Board that the association actually dates back to 1973, given that if was formed as an amalgamation of three existing groups: Recreation Association of Nova Scotia, Recreation Council on Disability NS, and the Volunteer Week Committee. After that meeting, Debby Smith and Brenda Robertson volunteered to record some of the 50 year history, for use by the Board in making decisions about what the association is currently being called to do. This document represents a fulfillment of that commitment covering roughly 1973 until the beginning of Covid 19. The research was carried out by reviewing a myriad of items including committee reports, research summaries, conference and workshop proceedings, annual reports, meeting minutes and similar documents. Additionally, an online discussion forum was set up with 15 retired leaders in the field, who were asked to respond to specific questions related to aspects of the past deemed necessary to write this report. The document is divided into 4 sections, each addressing a primary area of focus of the work carried out over the past 50 years. Under each of the sections (leadership development; membership services; equity, diversity and inclusion; and awareness, education, and advocacy), specific roles and responsibilities assumed by the association, as well as partners in the delivery system, have been identified. The document is far from a comprehensive history of the work of the association, but it does provide insight into the nature of the work that RNS and its predecessors have been called upon to do in the past. Included under each section are discussion questions to assist the current staff and directors, to make decisions about what is the critical work the association is currently being called upon to do. Those involved with the preparation of this report urge the staff and board to be mindful of the fact that a number of key provincial partners in the field either no longer exist or their capacity to contribute to the development of the field is very much diminished from what it was at one time.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

RNS and its predecessor RANS have always played a central role in ensuring there exists strong and capable leaders within the recreation field, who possess specialized knowledge and specific skills. This work has included 1) partnering with educational institutions offering professional preparation opportunities; 2) ensuring the existence of relevant professional development opportunities to meet the needs of the recreation sector; and 3) undertaking initiatives to support the growth and development of a strong volunteer force within the recreation sector.

1. Professional Preparation

Nova Scotia has benefited from having two universities and one college offering professional preparation programs. The Acadia Recreation Management degree program began in 1972 and

prepared professionals to work in a variety of professional settings including municipal recreation, sport management, outdoor, and tourism. Recognizing the fact that there were people working professionally in the recreation field without a degree in the 1970s when the Acadia program began, and that full time attendance at university was not probable, a Recreation Certificate program was conceived. It was developed to enable adult learners working in the field, to gain the knowledge contained in the degree program through taking a series of intensive condensed courses over time. The program consisted of 24 credit hours of required course work in Foundations, Concepts, Leadership, Programming, Organizational Structure, Agency Administration, Outdoor Recreation, and Tourism, as well as 6 elective credit hours.

Dalhousie University began offering a recreation degree program in 1977 with a focus on special populations/therapeutic recreation. The NS Community College (Truro campus) began offering a 2-year diploma program in 1996. During the 1980's, both Acadia and Dalhousie expanded their offerings to include an honours degree option and a Masters of Recreation. Agreements were eventually forged between the two universities and NSCC that would enable community college graduates to be awarded transfer credits toward a university degree should they be accepted into one of the degree granting programs. During the mid 1990's, the need arose for mid career professionals with undergraduate degrees to pursue higher level knowledge within the field outside the formal structure of a Masters degree program. Acadia responded with the creation of a Diploma in Advanced Leisure Studies, involving 18 credit hours of required course work and an additional 12 hours of focused elective work.

In 2012, Acadia discontinued offering the Recreation Management degree program upon the retirement of three key faculty members. A restructuring occurred which led to the development of a degree focusing on Community Development which offers some recreation courses as electives to the community development students.

The Role of that Recreation Nova Scotia and its predecessors have played in Professional Preparation

1. Provision of input into curriculum development relating to the needs of the profession

    a) Development of the DACUM chart: In 1977, the RANS partnered with the Recreation Society of Atlantic Canada on an initiative to identify the knowledge and skill required for all professionals working in the Recreation profession in Atlantic Canada. The process included a 3-day workshop to identify the components of the chart and later a 2 day workshop to test and refine the tool. The result was the identification of 10 main areas of competency (e.g., interpret and develop a philosophy) and between 7 and 23 specific items under each (e.g. apply theories of play, interpret principles of inclusion and exclusion, and interpret concepts of leisure education and counselling). The tool was used for curriculum planning in universities, assessment of job applicants, and by individuals seeking professional development.

    b) Advisory committees/Curriculum planning: The Association has provided input into program and curriculum development representing the needs of the sector both formally through

sitting on university advisory committees or less formally through participation in academic curriculum planning workshops.

2. Assistance with course development and delivery
   Association staff, as well as members, have been called upon occasionally to assist with the delivery of content with the curriculum of recreation degree programs either through the actual development and delivery of courses, serving as guest lecturers, supervising student placements, participating in career fairs/cafes, assisting with the assessment of student output, and by contributing to the development of resource materials.

3. Student engagement within the Association
   In 1990's, RNS added a student representative position to the Board of Directors. In addition to providing a means by which the student voice would be heard at the Board table, other initiatives were employed by the Association to engage the students with the professional community over time. During the 1990s, Association staff developed a series of student-centred initiatives at annual conferences which included such activities as a welcome and conference orientation for first time attendees, a mentor program, a meet and greet with the students and professionals, a list with of bios of students attending the conference in participant packages, and a student breakfast. For many years, in partnership with the Recreation Resource Centre, a research symposium was held at the conference, where Honours and Masters students were invited to share the findings of their research with implications for practitioners.

   In Fall of 2001, a weekend retreat was held with students and RNS staff to identify issues that each group had relative to the others. There were 17 students issues identified related to the potential role of RNS relative to the following types of situations: helping match students with employers, facilitating mentoring opportunities, recruitment of high school students to professional preparation programs, and promoting a code of ethical practices. A total of 12 issues were identified by the Association such as what role can students play in educating the profession about current technologies, how can students help promote the benefits messages, ways that students can help increase the research capability in the field, and what is the role of students in helping to sustain the Association. The capacity of each party to address the issues raised by the other was discussed and potential further initiatives were identified.

4. Sustainability of the Profession
   In 2010, the Association was concerned about the long-term sustainability of the recreation profession, particularly in light of the wave of retirements starting to occur by the baby boomers, and the increase in enrollments of recreation academic programs by out of province students. RNS developed a research proposal aimed at investigating *the status of educational and professional preparation for the recreation sector in Nova Scotia.* This was to be the first comprehensive study of supply and demand within the province with the intention of identifying potential supply issues so that they could be proactively addressed. Unfortunately, the $60,000 two year study was not able to receive funding.

2. Professional Development

The mark of a true professional is they remain up to date with the current knowledge in the field, in order to best meet the needs of those who seek their services. During the 1990's, there was a forum to discuss whether the association should develop a separate structure dedicated to the needs of professionals working within the field. It was concluded that recreation is an integrated delivery system very much dependant upon both professionals and volunteers, and the needs of both could be addressed within one organization. Providing professional development opportunities is a basic function of any professional association. The association's role in PD has been manifested in various ways: 1) standing committees, 2) annual conference, 3) resources/publications, 4) PD initiatives, 5) partnerships with the 'Centre', and 6) partnerships with government.

Role of Recreation Nova Scotia and Recreation Association of Nova Scotia in Professional Development

1. Standing Committees

   For much of its history, the structure of the association has included the existence of committees tasked with keeping abreast of the PD needs of members and ensuring that opportunities existed to address those needs. Over the years, the committee name and structure changed (e.g. RANS Professional Development Committee, RNS Education and Training committee) but the objectives were similar. Various methods were used in gathering data related to the professional development needs, and various means were implemented to address them (e.g. organize forums and workshops, develop resource materials, offer sessions to train resource leaders.

2. Conference

   A primary means by which RNS and its predecessors have provided PD opportunities is through the conference which was first staged by RANS in 1974 and has been held annually ever since. The conference consists of a myriad of learning opportunities including keynote addresses, pre conference workshops, a broad range of concurrent sessions, research symposium, networking breakfasts and lunches, off site tours, and a tradeshow. Speakers include experts from within the field and from related fields. The program is carefully designed to cover a broad range of topics designed to satisfy the needs of a diverse collection of delegates. As an example, 10 years after the amalgamation that created RNS, there were three keynote addresses given by an Olympian, a Comedian, and a renowned author. Sessions focused on such diverse topics as environmental leadership, managing youth victimization, the impact of technology on recreation, skateparks, planet diva teen, the aging suit, physical literacy, emerging practises in facility development, surviving difficult economic times, ageism: the last prejudice, building bikeways, the benefits of mammoth projects to small communities, rediscovering recreation, planner for the zoomer population, rural recreation, providing quality service for children, and effective conversation skills. Within a 3 day time frame, not only do delegates have access to a multitude of sessions, and get to meet with dozens of product and service providers at the tradeshow, they have an opportunity to network with 250 or so peers which often is the most beneficial professional development opportunity of all. Although the annual conference covered a broad range of topics, in 2007, RNS hosted a conference focused on the theme of active transportation.

3. Resources/Publications
   The association has always made resources available to the members for professional development purposes, using whatever the technology of the day happened to be. In the earlier years, that meant such forms as print materials, video tapes and models. In more recent times, such resources tended to be shared electronically, particularly through the creation of websites, online newsletters, and virtual training sessions. RANS published a quarterly magazine entitled *Recreation Matters* which contained information of general interest to the members as well as more in- depth articles frequently of a professional development nature. For example, the Spring 1998 edition, just prior to the merger that created RNS, was entitled the *Changing Face of RANS*. Articles written by leaders in the field at the time provided historical insight into the previous quarter century of work of the association, considerations for moving forward strategically, trends related to the volunteer sector, and moving tributes to a member of the recreation community who had recently passed away at a very young age from cancer.

   In the early 2000's, the concept of active transportation became a provincial government priority and numerous provincial departments and organizations also made it a priority, including RNS. The association approved an Active Transportation strategy in 2006. The following year, the annual conference attracting nearly 300 delegates, focused upon increasing knowledge about AT within the recreation community. RNS also developed and launched a website entitled Pathways for People, designed to educate the profession about the interface between AT and recreation. In 2008, RNS launched the *Municipal Information Network*, an online resource to enable those working within municipal recreation in the province to connect with one another for the purpose of information sharing and the exchange of ideas.

4. PD initiatives
   The association has long served as a delivery vehicle for professional development programs designed by other groups, to ensure access by recreation providers through the province. In 2001 Parks and Recreation Ontario (PRO) received $ 1,000,000 from the Trillium Foundation to develop a comprehensive quality assurance program. This initiative based on evidence became known as High Five - the only quality assurance program for sport and recreation programs for children 6-12 years old. RNS became the first province to work out a contractual arrangement with PRO for delivery - this contract became the framework for PRO's High Five expansion across Canada. In 2002 RNS hired Debbie Bauld, to co-ordinate the delivery of High Five. The development of this standard is built on an evidence informed framework of program assessments, awareness, policies and procedures, training and development. The program identifies five principles of healthy child development: a caring leader, mastery, play, friends and participation. Research tells us that the experiences children have in sport and recreation at an early age have a lifelong impact. Positive experiences children have in sport and recreation contribute to children becoming capable, caring, adults who contribute more effectively to their communities. High Five prepares leaders, coaches, trainers, managers, and supervisors to deliver on these principles through a wide variety of tools, resources, training and assessments.

   Along with establishing a co-ordinator RNS set up an advisory committee to oversee an HIGH FIVE pilot and evaluation of the program's effectiveness. Communities applied to participate and

were selected based on size, geography, diversity, type of organization and commitment. The 6 pilot communities were: Waycobah First Nation, Town of Pictou Recreation Department, Truro Boys and Girls Club, Digby Parks and Recreation, HRM Inner Core and Chester Municipal Recreation. Staff from each pilot site were trained to deliver the foundational course Principles of Healthy Child Development, assess program quality using Quest 2 and assess policies and procedures via Quest 1. Evaluation in the pilot sites included: training evaluation scores, interviews with directors, children's feedback and comparison with non pilot sites.

In 2007, HIGH FIVE developed a Sport Primer module targeting competitive sport that evolved into HIGH FIVE Sport in 2009. In 2015 HIGH FIVE developed a specific workshop addressing Childrens' Mental Health. Both of these additions were well received initially by the recreation community, then by public health and the sport community in Nova Scotia.

People in Canada over the age of 65 now outnumber those under the age of 15. Based on the success of the quality standard for children's programs, HIGH FIVE® has launched a new standard for older adult recreation. This 3-year project which began in Jan. 2018 builds on the current HIGH FIVE® national industry standard for children, using best practices and systems already in place to customize a standard for the rapidly advancing demographic; older adults. Quality recreation has a significant role to play in keeping older adults healthy and active. A new Principles of Healthy Aging Workshop for leaders and coaches working with older adults is now available. The PHA workshop is a one-day training that provides insights into the unique needs of older adults participating in recreation or leisure activities. Participants will learn evidence-based approaches to improve the experiences of older adults participating in recreation programs. The training covers topics like ageism, program planning and the importance that physical literacy and social connectedness play in sustained long-term health, improved mental and physical well-being and a better quality of life. This most recent development has led to new partnerships and alliances for RNS.

1n 1999 RNS forged a partnership with Sport Nova Scotia to develop a benefits campaign. The resulting work provided both tools and workshops to promote messaging that "Recreation Matters and Sport Makes a Difference".

In 1992 and 2004 RANS/RNS in partnership with the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association co-hosted the national CPRA conference in Halifax. These conferences provided amazing network opportunities as well as substantial exposure to thinking and best practices from across the nation.

In 2006, RNS co created the *Move More: HeartSmart Physical Activity Basics* program with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The 8 week program consisted of presentations and materials related to increasing physical activity levels. Nearly a hundred leaders were trained and 18 workshops held during the initial year. In 2008, RNS assumed sole responsibility for training facilitators and delivering the Move More program.

The spring of 2008, RNS offered 8 Nature Awareness workshops throughout the province for summer recreation staff. The workshops were designed to increase awareness on nature, understand the impact of recreation use on nature, and learn ways to lessen that impact.
A sponsored lecture series was initiated in the early 2000's, with the objective of spotlighting a prominent speaker at a gala luncheon, targeted at professionals and influential decision makers from related fields. The speaker would present on a topic of great significance to the field. The 2008 topic was *Connecting with our Kids* delivered by Max Valiquette, President of Youthography . In 2009, the speaker was Martin Leblanc, cofounder of the Children and Nature Network, speaking about the concept of *No Child Left Behind*. The following year, Stacy Turner, program consultant and Recreation Trends Expert with Greenplay spoke on *The Future of Recreation: The Power and Potential*.

In 2013 a unique collaborative effort involving RNS, Dalhousie University and the Canadian Mental Health Association developed the Recreation for Mental Health (R4MH) project. The purpose has been to promote collaboration between the health and recreation sectors in Nova Scotia to address the challenges associated with community recreation participation by people experiencing mental health challenges. The work developed practical resources and training that are evidence based and first voice informed.

5. Partnership with the 'Centre'

From the mid 1970's-mid 1990's, the association worked in close partnership with the Resource Centre located at Acadia. During those 2 decades, The Centre was the primary source of resources and professional development opportunities for the recreation community in the province. Once the Centre closed, RNS continued to offer on a limited basis some of the Centre services, such as Spring Symposium and the Research Symposium.
From 1974 until 1997, the Centre of Leisure Studies/Recreation Resource Centre of Nova Scotia served as the hub for information dissemination and related services for the recreation field, not only serving the needs of Nova Scotians but other parts of the country as well. From the perspective of the profession within the province, the Centre not only housed one of the largest specialized resource collections anywhere, it meant that recreation service providers had ready access to some of the best professional development opportunities in the country, as well as a myriad of research services not available in any other province. The staff of the Centre partnered with the staff of RNS and its predecessors on much of this work.

The Centre's resource library consisted of thousands of documents including recreation related books, journals, professional periodicals, reports, manuals, and audio visual materials indexed under 43 general headings and hundreds of sub headings, all available for inhouse use or loan to the recreation community within the province. The Centre became the focal point for professional development of the field with services including: Acadia Recreation Certificate Program, Spring Symposium, an annual mini workshop series, and packaged workshops on specific topics that groups could purchase and the Centre would customize and deliver to members of the specific group.

The most widely used packaged workshop focused upon legal liability in sport and recreation settings. The Centre produced video and print resources on the topic and contracted a legal expert, Brian Robertson, to develop and deliver workshops to dozens of groups around the province. The liability crisis of the late 80s left sport and recreation groups scrambling to find reliable information about their responsibility when it came to issues of negligence and the Centre workshops were able to provide the needed assistance. A binder containing the details of 200 Canadian sport and recreation negligence cases was a very popular item which the Centre developed and sold. For each case, the details were presented, along with the outcome, and an explanation of what sport and recreation would need to consider if they found themselves in such a situation, in order to avoid being found guilty of negligence.

Centre staff were also contracted on occasion to design and deliver training programs to specific clients. The largest such contract was with Correctional Services of Canada in the late 1980s, to design a comprehensive leisure education and life skills program to be used as a component of the rehabilitative process in Canadian federal correctional centres. Once the program was developed, extensive training with Correctional Services personnel took place in order to prepare them to deliver the program.

A sample of the one day mini workshops developed and delivered by the Centre include the following:

- Aging and Leisure
- At-Risk Youth and Recreation
- Conducting Community Research
- Creating an effective Waiver
- Effective Recreation Programming
- Family Leisure Education
- Gender Equity
- Girls/Women in Sport and Recreation
- Leisure and Spirituality
- Leisure Entrepreneurship
- Rec Evolution: Being all Things to all People
- Recreation and National Parks
- Running Meaningful Festivals and Events
- The Recreation Profession: Up Close and Personal
- The Use of Computers in Recreation
- Tourism and Recreation
- Trends in Recreation
- Women in Correctional Recreation
- Working with Consultants

The Centre undertook to provide concentrated three-day issue focused events. A key example was the New Beginnings forum to explore issues related to women's' engagement as participants, coaches, leaders, officials, decision makers, and professionals in the sport and recreation. The Forum identified issues and strategies to address inequities as well as initiated advocacy efforts that were carried on by several from that day forward.

The Centre's annual Spring Symposium was developed as a means of educating professionals working in the leisure services field, on current topics of interest within the field. Each symposium would last two or three days, in order to allow adequate time to understand the topic in some depth and for participants to explore ways the knowledge could be incorporated into their individual work environments. It was intended that participants would be fully engaged for the duration of the symposium which included evening activities. During the 80s, Spring Symposium would generally take place in the Wolfville area, and the instructor would be a leading expert in the topic, often American university professors. That is how such renowned experts as Dr John

Crompton from Texas, the global authority in leisure services marketing research; Dr Adah Strobell from Maryland who was an expert in inclusive recreation programming; and Dr Clare Gunn, an internationally recognized expert in Tourism from Michigan and Texas, came to spend to time on the Acadia campus.

Over time, as the field in Canada advanced, the perspective of American academics appealed to a smaller audience. Practitioners were seeking to increase their knowledge on the nature of specific issues they were facing, and finding the means to address them in the workplace. As a result, Spring Symposium started to focus more on issues within the field in Nova Scotia but still exploring them more in depth than would be the case in a typical conference session. The experts who would lead the symposium tended to be Canadians. Eventually, the content evolved into facilitated in depth discussion and problem solving rather than information dissemination, with local professionals with particular experience and expertise serving as leaders. Descriptions of some of the Spring Symposiums themes are as included below.

Vision 2000 (1998) In the Fall of 1987, a major government cabinet shuffle in Nova Scotia resulted in recreation being eliminated from the government agenda. This was a shock in the province that first established a separate Department of Recreation 15 years earlier. The profession was left in a state of confusion with many questions and very few answers. So the following spring, the Centre brought the profession together to analyze the public recreation provision in the province, identify and discuss current issues impacting the field, and develop a vision and blueprint for recreation for the year 2000. As a result of the symposium, visions had been developed for the following areas: Sport and Fitness, Outdoor Recreation, Culture, Education and Research, Rural Recreation, and Urban Recreation. Working groups fleshed out the issues in each area and identified strategies thus creating a global Vision for Recreation for 2000. The vision consisted of 11 goals that would form the collective agenda of recreation professionals in the province for the ensuing decade. These included such areas as access and inclusion, leisure education, becoming recognized as an essential service, enhancing the quality of life for Nova Scotians, qualified professionals, adequate facilities, access to resource information, networking, and province wide cooperation. A 40 page document was produced entitled Vision 2000: A Blueprint for Recreation in Nova Scotia, which served as a guideline for decision making in the province for a decade. Ironically, the province eliminated the funding for the Centre in 1998 forcing it to close however Recreation Nova Scotia and the NS Sport and Recreation Commission worked with Recreation faculty at Acadia to offer Spring Symposium, for a few additional years.

Recreation for All: Fact or Fantasy (1989) This symposium focused on the mandate of public recreation to serve the needs of all citizens, and the challenges in doing so. A panel of 7, representing various disenfranchised groups, assisted participants to understand the issues, challenging their personal beliefs and attitudes. Once the underlying issues were uncovered, a social change expert facilitated in depth discussion on how the profession could address each in an effective manner.

Leisure Education: The Road to the Future (1995) This year, widespread misconceptions of leisure education were discussed and participants gained insight into their role as leisure educators. The

importance of leisure education as a means to address pressing social issues was explored, and those present developed a tool chest of techniques and resources to assist them in their newly discovered role.

The Changing Face of Municipal Recreation (2003) With there having been a system of municipal recreation in place in the province for 30 years, it was time to take an in depth look at and how and why the field was, or should be, changing relative to the needs of all citizens. Individual sessions explored the trends impacting municipal leisure services, how the field had evolved in three decades, a survey of what had been occurring in individual municipalities managing organizational change, and the impact of the changes on those who serve as municipal recreation professionals.

Zero Based Thinking (2005) This symposium explored the concept of applying innovative thinking to daily decision-making rather than doing things the way they have always been done, which tends to stagnate thinking, stifle creativity, and limit possibilities. Dr Wendy Bedingfield led sessions entitled: Making Sense of Organizations, Becoming a Radical, Tools of a Zero Based Thinker, and Being a Zero Based Thinker. This symposium was developed to address an issue that was becoming widespread within the profession…complacency. Many service providers had fallen into the trap of accepting the status quo and accepting things the way they were, and not thinking about how they might be made better and working to improve recreation service delivery.

The province withdrew funding from the Centre and redirected it to the establishment of the national Leisure Information Network. Certain aspects of the collection were integrated into the Acadia library system, rendering the resources no longer accessible to the recreation profession, and the remainder of the collection was disposed of by university officials. This action of closing the Centre greatly reduced the availability of professional development and enrichment opportunities available to the recreation profession within the province.

6. Partnerships with Government

   The Provincial Government in its various configurations from Department of Recreation to Sport and Recreation Commission to too many other configurations to mention has always provided annual operational funding to support RANS/RNS through the years. In addition, many project partnership endeavours received funding as well as staff support thereby providing a great many development opportunities for professionals in the field, allied professions and volunteers. Some examples include:

   facilitating planning workshops for municipal units considering or entering amalgamations;

   facilitating workshops for practitioners to introduce *Organizational Effectiveness: A Consultants Resource*- this resource examines consultants' skills and knowledge, how to assess an organizations' effectiveness and provides practical tools and resources to for improvement; and

   during the 1990's and early 2000's RNS and government planned and hosted Municipal Seminars bringing together municipal Councillors and Chairs of Recreation Committees/Commissions to explore recreation topics, share best practices and identify future directions. These two-day seminars were a major opportunity to influence and inform municipal decision makers.

3. Working with Volunteers

Long before recreation became a profession, volunteers accepted responsibility for the provision of recreation opportunities for themselves, the families, and their communities. The development of the profession did not negate the need for volunteers, whose work has always been motivated by the desire for action be that clearing a pond to facilitate outdoor skating rink, raising money to build or maintain a facility, becoming a youth leader, or sitting on a committee.

Volunteers have long been recognized as essential to the provision of every aspect of recreation in Nova Scotia, and throughout Canada and the world. The importance of the need to enhance volunteer capacity in all sectors is acknowledged as an important function and has become entrenched in the work of many government agencies and professional organizations. Recreation Nova Scotia was formed as a result of a merger of three groups, one of which was the Volunteer week committee. Not only are volunteers an integral part of the provision of recreation opportunities, volunteering is a primary form of recreation for thousands of Nova Scotians. Considerable work has been carried out in recent years to gather data to assist groups to better understand the volunteer experience in order to more effectively recruit, develop, recognize, and retain volunteers.

Throughout the years, RNS and its predecessors have been actively involved in 1) Volunteer Training, 2) Volunteer recognition, 3) Volunteer Membership category, 4) Volunteer focused research and 5) Enhancing the volunteer experience.

The Role of Recreation Nova Scotia and its predecessors have played relative to Volunteerism

1. Volunteer Training

Nova Scotia Volunteer Training Workshops: With the formation of the Department of Recreation and staff dedicated provincially and municipally to supporting community recreation opportunities, it was identified that volunteers needed development opportunities. In 1981-82 the Nova Scotia Volunteer Training Workshop program was developed through provincial funding provided to the Recreation Association of Nova Scotia. RANS identified and contracted with 4 master trainers to develop workshop and manual content for Financial Management, Short and Long Term Planning, Recruiting and Motivating Volunteers, and Effective Meetings. Of note is that Jim Bayer was one of the first master trainers for Effective Meetings. The work was done in partnership with the Cultural Federation of Nova Scotia which is an umbrella organization developed to support the infrastructure of 8 cultural organizations. The organizations are: Craft Nova Scotia, Dance Nova Scotia, Theatre Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Choral Federation, Association of Nova Scotia Museums, Writers Federation of Nova Scotia, Visual Arts Nova Scotia and Strategic Arts Management. Potential trainers were recruited through RANS and CFNS with an eye to ensuring all regions were represented and that trainers had previous experience in facilitating. In 1982 the first Train the Trainers workshop was held at Oak Island – a two and a half workshop that included an overview of the program, facilitation skills, workshop content and practice sessions where potential trainers prepared and delivered a workshop segment and peers and the master trainer provided feedback. The workshops were very well received as they were accessible in all regions and local communities and took place in community halls and centres, museums, fire halls, legions, and schools. Between 1982 and 1986 3 new topics were added: Fund raising, Leadership and Marketing. Around the mid eighties the Interprovincial Sport and Recreation Committee recognized the

need for volunteer training opportunities across the country and organized a joint working group consisting of provincial recreation association executive directors and federal representatives to develop a national program. Leaning heavily on RANS experience, content and model the National Skills Program was born developing glossy manuals using the same content topics and trained master trainers from all provinces. RANS moved to use the National Skills materials.

Conference sessions: For many years, the annual conference was held Thursday to Saturday to ensure that volunteers working during the week were able to attend at least one full day. The program planning committees always identified volunteers as a stream and ensured that there were a number of sessions offered that addressed the specific information needs of the volunteer sector.

Workshops/Resources for Volunteers: Another key role played by the association was to contract with experts to develop recourse materials and deliver workshops on topics of particular interest to volunteers when specific needs were identified. Examples of topics addressed in this manner included: Implementation of the GST and implications for volunteer groups, Economic Impact Assessment (Brian Van Blarcom), Strategic Planning (Max Chauvin), and Evidence Based Decision Making. Another initiative was development of the Nova Scotia Video Training Series, facilitated by Max Chauvin, with funding from the NS Voluntary Sector Professional Capacity Trust. The series covered 20 topics designed to assist new Board members carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively.

2. Volunteer Recognition

Provincial Volunteer Awards: For the past 48 years, the provincial government has sponsored the Provincial Volunteer Awards. More than 410,000 Nova Scotians volunteer, contributing an average of 192 hours per year. That represents 79 million hours of volunteering that the province wishes to acknowledge. Each municipality and First Nation Community selects a representative volunteer to attend a gala luncheon to receive acknowledgement from provincial officials. For a number of years, the association partnered with the province coordinating the initiative.

Association Awards: Each year the association holds an awards dinner in conjunction with the annual conference. During this event, awards are given out, which acknowledge the work of notable professionals or groups, as well as the volunteers who have made significant contributions toward the betterment of the recreation**.** Although most of the awards seek nominations and can be awarded to those whose contributions are made as a professional or volunteer, the *Outstanding Volunteer Award* was established in 2008 to acknowledge someone who has contributed significantly to the work of the association as a volunteer. The individual is decided upon by the Board and John MacLean was the inaugural recipient. The prestigious *Bluenose Achievement Award* was originally designed to recognize outstanding contribution to recreation and parks in Nova Scotia by volunteer groups. It is now awarded to an individual or community group that provides or supports activities and services that successfully achieves the values and benefits of recreation.

3. Volunteer Membership Category

Volunteer groups have always been able to access particular benefits through a designated membership category. Any volunteer not-for-profit group that supports the purpose and objectives of the Association, but which is not eligible under the municipal category shall be eligible for membership, and

are eligible for two representatives with two votes and full membership privileges, including discounts on resources and training, access to all programs, including the RNS Awards, and all mailouts.

Recreation commission/committee members attended conferences, had a designated number of voting members, and some served on the Board. The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities participated in giving sessions at the conference and had a column in the association magazine. The connection between the association and those elected and appointed municipal staff was significantly reduced with the elimination of the municipal cost sharing program in 1995. A number of municipalities eliminated their recreation committees and even their departments. In other cases, the staff responsibility for recreation services was combined with other municipal services such as economic development, tourism, and even cemeteries.

One particular benefit enjoyed by volunteer groups has been access to the RNS general liability insurance program. In 1988, an insurance crisis hit the field which saw premiums rise by as much as a thousand percent meaning many recreation service providers could not afford insurance and therefore ceased to operate. But through the association, Volunteer Group members were able to purchase affordable general liability insurance designed for volunteer recreation groups. All members of the organization are covered including executives, managers, coaches, trainers, officials, employees and volunteers while acting within the scope of their duties on your behalf. These persons are protected should they be named in an action for bodily injury or property damage to a third party. They are not insured for injury to themselves or their property. In 1987, the association undertook a study of the learning needs of these individuals in order to ensure that they were providing appropriate training opportunities to keep the committee/commission members current with regards to aspects of the field over which they were expected to make decisions.

4. Volunteer focused Research

Community Recreation Committees/Commissions once existed in most municipal units throughout the province. They were recognized as a special membership category within the association and acknowledged for the power they held as decision makers. As such, it was important that they be as informed as possible about aspects related to the field in order to make informed decisions.
In 1987, the association undertook a study of the learning needs of these individuals in order to ensure that they were providing appropriate training opportunities to keep the committee/commission members current with regards to aspects of the field over which they were expected to make decisions.

On the premise that “volunteers are a key ingredient to the growth and development of sport and recreation in Nova Scotia”, the RANS Leadership committee undertook an initiative in 1998 to assist professionals to become more knowledgeable and skilled to work effectively with volunteers. A survey investigated the expressed needs of professionals in working with volunteers. Based upon the data, three learning interventions were developed: a workshop series, informal learning group established, and self directed learning resources gathered.

The association has undertaken and participated in numerous research initiatives aimed at better understanding aspects of the volunteering in order that the experience can be enhanced for the individual helping to ensure the continuance of a strong and viable volunteer force. One example of

such an initiative undertaken by the association, in cooperation with various partners, focused upon better understanding *The Volunteer Experience of Women in Sport and Recreation (2007)*. The primary purpose was to produce data that would be useful to recreation and sport organizations seeking to increase the number of female volunteers. This was intended to help address the long standing challenge of females being under represented as volunteers, particularly in management and decision making roles. The work acknowledged that all aspects of the volunteer experience differ greatly for males and females, and that the ways that recreation and sport groups traditionally operate tend to attract and cater to male volunteers.

5. Enhancing the Volunteer Experience

The year 2001 was designated the international year of the volunteer. The following year the Federal Government created the Canadian Volunteer Initiative to encourage people to volunteer, to improve the capacity of groups to involve volunteers in their work, and to enhance the volunteer experience. From 2002 until 2007, in cooperation with Community Links, RNS co hosted CVI within the province. In 2006, RNS established volunteerforum.ca to provide support for not for profit groups across the province. In 2008, Volunteer Nova Scotia was re established to support volunteer organizations, assist groups recruit skilled volunteers, and to assist Nova Scotians find satisfying volunteer experiences.

Questions for Consideration:

1. **What gaps currently exist related to leadership preparation and development (professional and volunteer) within the recreation field in Nova Scotia today?**

2. **What could be the outcome if those gaps are not addressed?**

3. **Where is Recreation Nova Scotia best positioned to take the lead in addressing specific gaps?**

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Some believe that everything the association does and ever has done is for the benefit of the members. However, certain initiatives and services have a more direct benefit to members than others. This section is designed to provide a historical overview of such activities. In the 1970's, when the Recreation Association of Nova Scotia, Sport Nova Scotia, and the NS Department of Recreation were being established, the government designed 'special status' within its funding structure to provide ongoing annual operational the funding to RNS and SNS to represent all interests within their respective areas. Therefore, RNS was mandated to represent the interests of the entire recreation sector for the guaranteed government funding, and not simply the interests of those who took out RANS memberships. As such, the provision of direct services to address the specific needs of the members has always been only a part of the associations mandate.

The services that directly address the needs of members is what motivates many people to join the association. As such, the association leadership has tried to keep on top of the specific needs of those in the various membership groups throughout the years. In 2007, the association put concerted effort into identifying and connecting with individuals and groups who could benefit from membership in the association. In that year, the membership grew to over 800. There have been numerous such initiatives undertaken such as membership satisfaction focus groups in 2000, and the education and training needs assessment in 2001.

The role that Recreation Nova Scotia and its predecessors have played relative to Membership Services

1. **Professional Development**
   Access to professional development was not only a primary motivation for joining the association, offering such opportunities was a major role played by staff. Details about specific professional development initiatives are included in the leadership section. The types of professional development opportunities available to the membership included the following: annual conference, reduced rates at other conferences such as CPRA, Atlantic Recreation and Facilities Conference, Spring Symposium, Lunch and Learn sessions, Recreation for Mental Health training, Physical Literacy Instructor Program, HIGH FIVE training, Moving to Inclusion training, Volunteer Skills workshops, Confronting the Challenges of Access workshop, Everyone gets to Play workshops, Canadian Volunteer Initiative presentations/conference, Annual Research Symposium, Nature Awareness Workshops, Outdoors For All Summit, Pathways for People Conference, Sport Primer workshops, NS Before and After School Training, and Universal Playspace Design Forums.

2. **Finance**
   There are a number of ways the association has assisted members with aspects related to finance. One way is assisting members to raise funds for their respective groups and the best example is administration of the lottery program (called LUCKY DUCK in the latter years) which existed from 1979 until 2017, where recreation groups would sell lottery tickets and split the profits with the association. As an example, in 2008 180 groups sold tickets raising $114,000, 70% of the which remained to fund the participating groups.

The association on occasion provided professional development opportunities related to finance. As an example, RNS trained over 100 people through regional workshops, on *Ten Practises for Managing Your Charitable Status and Completing T3010A forms*. Other examples of specific professional development workshops developed and delivered include *Implementation of the GST and implications for volunteer groups*, and conducting *Economic Impact Assessments*. In the 1980s, *Financial Management* was one of the most frequently delivered sessions of the Nova Scotia Volunteer Training Workshops as was FUNd Raising.

Over the years, direct funds have been made available to members through various initiatives including bursaries and grant programs. The James Bayer award which existed for years, with funds raised through an annual golf tournament, assisted parks and recreation professionals financially in the pursuit of professional development in the sector. In 2009, RNS signed on as one of 13 partners, in a restructuring of the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. This has provided access for the RNS members to funding programs of CPRA, including the Harry Boothman bursary.

Through the SOGO active program, which RNS administered, over a hundred youth initiated physical activity challenges have been funded. In partnership with RNS, the ParticipACTION Teen Challenge, which ended in 2016, provided funding for many great initiatives and programs over the years. Established in 2008, the *Recreation for All Foundation*, established by RNS, raised, managed, and distributed funds targeting the reduction and elimination of barriers to participation in recreation through three programs: the Improving Access Fund, the Education Program Fund, and the Research Fund. Being an association member, has historically included discounts such as joining CPRA, attending various conferences and professional development initiatives, purchasing goods and services from specific partners, and accessing specific resource materials.

3. **Peer Recognition**

   Having one's work publicly acknowledged is considered by most people as a great honour. Since the 1970's, there has existed an awards program that focuses attention upon individuals or groups for outstanding contributions to the field. Certain awards recognize best practices in programming and facility development, while others acknowledge the achievements of specific individuals. Traditionally there has been a gala dinner, and awards presentations are made in front the membership. The award program has been reviewed periodically and new awards have been created to reflect the changing nature of the field. Not only does the award program benefit the recipients, the entire membership comes together to learn about, and honour, the outstanding work of their peers. RNS being a provincial/territorial partner in the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, enables RNS members to be eligible for various awards offered under the CPRA Awards program.

4. **Risk and Insurance**

   The recreation field has always been concerned about safety but understanding that certain activities are inherently risky means that risk management is of great concern to recreation administrators. To that end, the association has undertaken numerous professional development initiatives over the years related to risk management including conference sessions, workshops, hiring a risk management officer (summer position), and developing a data base inventory of over 90 resources related to the topic.

During the 1980s, the cost of liability insurance skyrocketed shaking the recreation community to its very core. Certain groups were no longer eligible for insurance coverage while others could not afford the exorbitant premiums so many programs and services disappeared over night. The association was able to offer recreation groups a general liability package as a benefit of membership . The insurance program continues to be a significant benefit of the group membership category. The program is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets the needs of the membership. For example, in 2000, the option to obtain two million in general liability was added. In 2012, the service has been expanded to include Directors' and Officers' liability insurance.

In 2005, the association represented the recreation delivery system on the Atlantic Canada task force on insurance availability and affordability. A comprehensive report was developed which included 27 recommendations directed at government and the insurance industry aimed at making insurance more accessible and affordable.

5. Communications and Networking

Being a member of the association afforded individuals numerous means through which to be informed about what was going on within the recreation field and to connect with others working in the field. Networking took place at conferences and other gatherings but on a regular basis it occurred through various forms of communication from the association. In the days before widespread use of computers, a publication entitled *RANS Tidings* served to keep the membership informed and connected to one another. The original format was a 16 page newspaper distributed to members 4 times per year. Association staff, Board members, partners, and invited guests generated the content which included information about association business, articles of interest, and details of upcoming events. The publication was funded by ads from select businesses that would be of interest to the members such as consultants and partner recreation groups. As an example, the content of the winter 1989 edition included feature articles on trends, environmental concerns, open space planning, youth programming, recreation and the arts, dealing with tourists, and the relationship between leisure and unemployment. Other content included an editorial, news about who had switched positions in the field, photos from the conference awards dinner, the annual report from the Aquatic Facility Managers Association, and a message from the RANS president. Ads were placed by Participaction, CPRA, the Recreationists Association of West Central Ontario, David Kern consulting, and Catalyst consulting. In the early 1990s, Tidings assumed a more streamlined look, 16 page 8.5 by 11-inch format. By the time of the merger that created RNS, the publication was titled *Recreation Matters*: *The Magazine of the Recreation Association of Nova Scotia*. By 2005, RNS had developed a sophisticated website which replaced some of the content formerly included in the quarterly print publication such as weekly e-bulletins, member profiles, calendar of events, polls, and a job mart. What was lost in the transition to electronic communication was the featured articles.

Since its inception in 1945, the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association has served as a national leader for the recreation sector. Initially a membership-based association, in 2009, CPRA reinvented itself as an alliance, with membership consisting of the 13 provincial and territorial recreation associations, including RNS. Prior to that, members of provincial and territorial associations would receive discounts on CPRA memberships and products/services. For nearly 60 years, 6 times a years, CPRA published *PARKS & Recreation Canada*, a high quality 40 page, professional magazine that served as a benefit to

members. The publication had an editor, an editorial committee, and contracted publishing to a nationally recognized company. Content included 4-5 feature length articles; regular columns such as The Leading Edge, Environmental Factsheet, Benefits, Active Living, Greenways News, and Balancing Act; and a number of departments responsible for content including editorial, CPRA news, Coming events, Reader replies, Letters, On the Shelf, Commercial Corner, and Product Directory.

6. **Publications and Resources**

Another important benefit to association members has always been access to resource materials for purchase. In some cases, resources have been developed exclusively by the association to meet the needs of the members. In other cases, the association has worked in partnerships with others to create resources of benefit to the membership as well as the boarder community. If not exclusive access, members would receive a discount as a benefit of their association membership. Most of the online resources are free access but without the association they would not exist. Examples of the types of resources include print materials: Directory of Professional Development Opportunities for Recreation Administrators, Writing Job Descriptions for Municipal Recreation Positions, Effective Organizations: A Consultants Resource, Directory of Professional Development Opportunities for Recreation Administrators, and the NS Volunteer Training Workshop Manuals. Others are online resources such as NSConnect.ca, nsoutdoornetwork.ca, activekidsns.ca, nsvolunteerforum.ca, MINetwork.org, and pathwaysforpeople.ca. Documents have been created that reflect specific work of the association, examples of which include the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia, The Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation, The Power and Potential: The Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation Framework for Action, The Volunteer Experience of Women in Sport and Recreation, and the Recreation for Mental Health diagnostic Tool. The association has even been involved with the creation of games designed as instructional aids, with an early example being Typical Town and a recent one being the Rec4Mental Health Game. Having direct access to such a myriad of useful resources within the province over the years has certainly been of great benefit to association members.

Questions for Consideration:

On the website, RNS states that it is Nova Scotia's leading recreation association and that it plays an important role in serving its members as the voice of recreation and leisure.

1. **Is the membership of the association presently inclusive of all recreation stakeholders in the province? If not, what are the benefits of striving to attract a broader base of members?**
2. **Does the current membership base support the claim of RNS being the voice of recreation and leisure in the province?**
3. **How are the needs of the members currently assessed and addressed?**
4. **Will the data collected through recent initiatives such as Shared Strategy Sharing Tour and Anti Racism Stakeholder Engagement process, impact the nature of membership structure or membership services?**
5. **5. As Nova Scotia's "leading recreation association", what services is the association better positioned to provide to members than any other groups and organizations?**

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Throughout the fifty years' history of Recreation Association of Nova Scotia and Recreation Nova Scotia the work that has focused on what is currently referred to as Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, has been best described as a series of initiatives, seldom sustained and frequently initiated by a partner other than RANS/RNS. As the culture has shifted, buoyed by strong advocacy efforts/ movements in society overall, the organization has had to find resources to focus energies to contribute to recreation opportunities for all, removing barriers and creating space for all voices. The language used to describe organizations' work in this area has changed over the decades. In the following descriptions the nomenclature illustrates the language used then while also reflecting the thinking that guided the work.

1976- **The Recreation Council on Disability (RCDNS)** came into existence a few years after Sport Nova Scotia and the Recreation Association of Nova Scotia were incorporated. The structure of the organization was somewhat unique as it was set up as a council composed of representation from four large advocacy groups at the time. They were: Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Paraplegic Association, Canadian National Institute of the Blind and the Canadian Association on Mental Retardation (now known as Inclusion N.S.). Initial board members were the Executive Directors of the four organizations plus board members from sheltered workshops, institutions such as Adult Residential Centres, and group homes. The aims of the organization were to advocate for recreation opportunities for individuals with disabilities, increase awareness of the benefits of recreation, provide professional development opportunities and provide services that enabled participation. Some key actions during the twenty-two-year history included internships with Dalhousie University Master students enrolled in the Master of Science focus Leisure and Disabled Persons, partnerships with Dalhousie Faculty to carry out research and focused project work, development of a Leisure Counselling Resource Manual followed up by workshops to promote its use. A sport development project took place to identify potential for sport development within the provincial sport organizations and municipal recreation. The one and only keen sport organization was curling. The development coordinator at the time, Brenda Robertson, and Debby Smith the RCDNS project coordinator developed a plan to demonstrate curling at the Halifax Curling Club. An outdoor equipment loan program was established at RCDNS as well as a resource library. Annual conferences with awards recognizing outstanding efforts also occurred. Interesting to note in the last two years of the existence of RCDNS joint conferences were held with the Recreation Association of Nova Scotia. During the seventies and eighties, a great deal of work of the organization was influenced by academics and their thinking at the time. Wolf Wolfensberger, a German author wrote on Normalization which means to make available to all people with disabilities patterns of life and conditions of everyday living which are as close as possible to the regular circumstances and ways of life of society: this would be a direct contradiction to the diversity movement today. He developed an audit system called PASS (Program Assessment Service System) which provided a framework for analysis of service systems. Another influential and local academic was John Lord, who focused work on creating models for integration to support full community participation in community life and the system changes required to support integration.

1981- RCDNS carried out a **comprehensive study** on "The Status of Physical Education Services for Disabled Children in Nova Scotia" and used the results to advocate for improved services including better staff preparation and increased opportunities for integration.

1989- Spring Symposium, **Recreation for All: Fact or Fantasy**, focused on the mandate of public recreation to serve the needs of all citizens, and the challenges in doing so. A panel of 7 individuals representing disenfranchised groups assisted participants to understand the issues, challenging their personal beliefs and attitudes. Once the underlying issues were uncovered, a social change expert facilitated in depth discussion on how the profession could address the issues. This symposium was particularly memorable owing to the nature of the stories shared by the panel members, in which they gave personal examples from their own lives, which illuminated the ways the actions or inactions of recreation services providers meant that they were not able to participate. Panelists included a single mom living below the poverty line, an individual with a hearing impairment, a man with AIDS, an African Nova Scotian, an individual who uses a wheelchair, a recent immigrant, two elderly individuals, and an elite female athlete. Their powerful experiences struck a deep chord in the professional heart of those present, who had no idea how simple decisions made every day excluded entire groups of people.

1989- The Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission, with Mike Arthur as the lead, invited RCDNS to participate in the development of a **Recreation and Disabled Persons Policy** for the Commission. Very little action resulted from this policy, and it has remained a well-kept secret to this day.
1989-A Sport Nova Scotia membership survey was conducted which collected gender data from 50 sport governing bodies. The results indicated that 65% reported that fewer than 40 percent of registered participants were female; 88% reported that fewer than 40% the Board members were female; 84% reported that fewer than 40% of coaches were female; and 80% reported that fewer than 40% of officials were female.

1989- The Recreation Resource Centre of Nova Scotia organized a three-day provincial forum entitled **New Beginnings**, designed to explore issues related to women's engagement as participants, coaches and leaders, officials, board members, and professionals. The forum was a partnership between the Centre, the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport, the Sport Nova Scotia Women and Sport Committee, and the Nova Scotia Sport & Recreation Commission. Seventy-five participants were invited to attend, representing a broad range of key stakeholders. The keynote speaker was Abby Hoffman, Director General of Sport Canada. A comprehensive proceeding was produced which included 89 specific strategies to address the 128 issues identified by participants. The overarching recommendation was for the provincial government to facilitate the development of a policy and plan to address the issues related to girls and women in recreation and sport. However, no organization stepped forward to provide the leadership and so it would be another 25 years before an organization (Women Active Nova Scotia) would finally become established within the province to truly focus on such work.

1994-At the Annual Conference of RANS, it was becoming increasingly clear that since 1989 and the New Beginnings forum, very little work was taking place around gender equity. Leadership was needed as well as support from the government and action was required. To initiate action **a resolution** was passed at the annual meeting directing RANS to "coordinate cooperative activity in gender equity initiatives".

1995- The Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission started collecting data on gender equity and looking at government activity across Canada and around the world. Staff from the Commission met with RANS to discuss their intended actions around gender equity in light of the 1994 resolution. RANS and the NSSRC decided to work together initially to develop **Commission Policy on gender equity**.

1996- A **Gender Equity Working Committee** was formed – co-chaired by Commission staff and a RANS member with representation from RANS, Sport Nova Scotia, Recreation Facility Association of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia School Athletic Federation, municipal recreation, officiating, coaching, community and university sport and parents. The goals of the policy are: increase the number of women in leadership roles in sport and recreation, increase participation and involvement of females in sport and recreation, increase awareness of the benefits of female participation, and increase awareness of gender equity issues within government. Actions included: advocacy and change, leadership development, resource allocation, and promoting safe and welcoming environments. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, the Women's Directorate, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Canadian Association on the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity also participated in reviewing the policy.

1997- **Gender Equity Policy** was approved by the Nova Scotia government. Provincial initiatives in support of the policy were carried out without dedicated staff or fiscal resources. In 2004 the Sport and Recreation Division (SRD) of the Office of Health Promotion hired Chaytor Consulting Services Ltd. to carry out an evaluation of the Gender Equity policy. The evaluation examined "What changes related to gender equity have occurred since implementation of the policy and to what extent has the gender equity policy contributed to the changes?" The report stated "the findings of the evaluation clearly indicate change in various aspects of gender equity (participation, excellence, capacity, interaction) in sport and recreation. In most instances this change has been positive and observed at all levels of the system but it is difficult to attribute developments in gender equity to any single factor ". "There is little doubt that the Gender Equity Policy has had an impact…and that increased support in terms of resources are required for this trend to continue."

1998- Following discussions, facilitated by the NSSRC, about the decline in government funding and their shared mandate, RANS, RCDNS and the Volunteer Association decided it would be in their best interest to come together as one organization. They dissolved their organizations and adopted a new structure and became incorporated as Recreation Nova Scotia. This is mentioned here as it impacted the field in a major way and one needs to wonder if it also served to reduce focus on equity, diversity and inclusion.

2005- **Everybody Gets to Play** (EGTP), originally developed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association to assist communities in mobilizing to develop policies/programs and practices to support recreation opportunities for all by addressing barriers for individuals with low-income. Funds were provided to RNS by CPRA and Health Promotion and Protection-Physical Activity Branch to support three pilot communities (Whitney Pier Boys and Girls Club, and two others). A coordinator, Rachel Bedingfield was hired, ambassadors went to Toronto for training, and then 8-10 community workshops were held with 140 participants throughout the province.

2007- Recreation Nova Scotia with funding from Canadian Volunteer Initiative and HPP focused research on better understanding the **volunteer experience of females in sport and recreation**. The research clearly demonstrated that females were underrepresented as volunteer board members at both the provincial and community levels and particularly in decision making and management roles. A small work group came together to create resources to assist organizations in recruiting and supporting female volunteers but with a lack of funding the work did not come to fruition until much later.

2008 – **Recreation for All** Association was established with EGTP funds. The initial Board of Directors included Ivy Warren, Carol Pickings- Anthony, Pauline Doucet, Paula Doyle, Linda Atkinson, Dawn Stegen, Laurene Rehman, and Kerry Munro. The role of the Association was to reduce and eliminate barriers to participation in recreation caused by poverty, distance, disability, the built environment, and culture. The grants programs offered included the improving access fund, the education program fund, and the research fund. The Association dissolved in 2017 due to challenges in getting board members, fundraising and the evolution of the Canadian Tire Jump Start program.

2008-RNS produced a document detailing the **Advocacy Priorities** for the association. A belief of the association was that "all Nova Scotians should have access to sport and recreation opportunities, regardless of their gender, race, socio economic status, disability etc". The related advocacy priorities included urging the government to do the following: create a comprehensive provincial strategy and coalition to ensure equitable access to recreation opportunities for all; ensure recreation programs and services are culturally sensitive; promote recreation programs and services, especially those involving physical activity, to women and girls; increase recreation opportunities to children and youth living in poverty; and enhance opportunities to access recreation services for people living in rural/remote areas.

2008- Recreation Nova Scotia in partnership with Recreation New Brunswick and Recreation PEI, hired dMA consultants to carry out a comprehensive study of Policies and Practices in Atlantic Canada related to: **Access to Recreation for low-income Children and Youth**. The report made 11 recommendations to ensure access to recreation for children and youth from low income families. No action followed provincially.

2008 – **The Power and the Potential**: The Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation Framework for Action was created. For many years conversations around the need for a recreation policy had taken place. For various reasons including changes in government and mandates of Departments and limited advocacy no work had occurred. In an effort to initiate thinking about policy work the Outdoor Recreation Coordinator of the Physical Activity – Sport- Recreation Division of Health Promotion and Protection invited RNS and SNS to come together with Department staff to identify and enunciate core values to inform decision making, help set priorities, inform planning and strategies and provide direction in policy work. By naming them they become clearer and help the field maintain its course of action. Facilitated by John Ure and following some consultation processes the following values were articulated: Fairness, Inclusion, Accessibility, Stewardship, Building on our Strengths, People, Fun and Challenging. The Power and Potential served to move thinking along the paths of Equity and Inclusion while falling short around Diversity and galvanizing action.

2010- **Move More for Active Aging**- Recreation Nova Scotia with funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors modified the Move More Program to meet the specific needs and interests of older adults who want to learn about healthy active aging and ways to increase their physical activity levels. Training for both Move More and Move More for Active Aging took place to prepare leaders to deliver local workshops.

2010- Recreation Nova Scotia annual conference included a panel session that deeply examined what had changed with respect to gender equity and what needs to change. A landmark commitment was made as part of that session when the Director of the Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation Division of the Department of Health and Wellness committed to hosting **a gender equity forum** to bring key stakeholders together to focus on gender equity. At about the same time a Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation **Diversity Reduction Task Team** was established as a priority with staff time and resources dedicated to pursue this work.

2011-Three long serving Nova Scotia Recreation professionals (Gilbert, Robertson, & Smith) drafted a discussion paper entitled **The Core and the Edges: A Call to Action** which was distributed throughout the province and later became a foundational document at the National Recreation Summit and informed the National Framework. The premise of the paper is that there are 5 areas in which the recreation field has traditionally carried out its work (creating opportunities, building spaces, leadership development, engaging citizens, and community building). Four predominant shifts are occurring (environmental, technological, health, and increasing disparities) that are calling for the recreation profession to take on additional work. In terms of disparities, the paper suggests that along with other professions we must strive for social justice and the elimination of systemic societal discrimination that give roots to recreation disparity by facilitating opportunities for some and denying them to others, based upon such factors as language, race, ethnicity, age, income, religion, gender identity, and, sexual orientation.

2011- Physical Activity, Sport, Recreation (PASR) staff invited a group of stakeholders to plan the **Gender Equity Forum**. Recreation Nova Scotia had representation on this group. The Forum took place in 2012 with Wendy Bedingfield as the keynote speaker. The Minister of Health and Wellness, Maureen MacDonald, attended and supported the need for action. For the workshop sessions an Organizational Assessment on Gender Equity Tool was created that came from the 2007 Volunteer Experiences of Women in Sport and Recreation research. The tool provided a way for organizations to examine their work in gender equity and develop concrete plans to address gap areas. The tool included: Formal systems, Leadership, Recruitment and Retention, Education & Training, Communication, Access & Participation and Facilities & Equipment. Following workshop sessions small group planning took place to identify the way forward. The groups included: Media-its influence and how to use, Policy, Planning/Accountability, Leveraging Current Assets, Information Sharing and Networking, Training and Retention, Diversity, Awakening our Sleeping Men, and Navigating the System. Of pivotal interest emerging from the discussions was the need for a provincial umbrella organization devoted to advancing women and girls in Physical activity, Sport, and Recreation.

2013- PASR staff invited a **small working group** to come together to identify next steps. The group included: Recreation Nova Scotia, Sport Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia School Athletic Association, Recreation Facility Association of Nova Scotia, Canadian Sport Centre Atlantic, Municipal representation, and the

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on Women. Over the next year and a half following advice from CAAWS, examining other provinces' approaches to gender equity work and consultation to explore best models. *Women Active Nova Scotia* was established, housed within Recreation Nova Scotia via a Memorandum of Understanding guiding the structure and funding flow.

2013 – **Recreation for Mental Health (R4MH).** A unique effort originally initiated by Dalhousie University, brought together Recreation Nova Scotia as well as the Canadian Mental Health Association to promote collaboration between the health and recreation sectors in Nova Scotia to address the challenges associated with community recreation participation by people experiencing mental health challenges. The work developed practical resources and training that ae evidence based and first voice informed. This work continues today with training new trainers to support local workshops for practitioners to improve their practice.

2013- The Active Living Branch of Health and Wellness invited Recreation Nova Scotia to form a Task Force to work together to develop a **Recreation Strategy** that would entail shared responsibility for its development and implementation. Even though Premier Rodney MacDonald, had made a commitment in 2005 to make this work happen. Not a great deal of action had taken place in the interim.

2015-**Women Active Nova Scotia** was formally established with funding assistance from The Active Living Branch of Health and Wellness, with a mission to advocate, educate, collaborate, and promote meaningful active living experiences and leadership opportunities to enrich the lives of all women and girls in Nova Scotia. The Leadership group for the new organization included: Rachel Bedingfield and Linda Atkinson (co chairs), Michele Aucoin (Provincial rep), Rhonda Lemire (RNS rep), Amy Walsh (SNS rep) and Cindy Russell (WANS Director). The organization developed a comprehensive strategic plan, with a signature event the Trendsetter Awards. The awards were designed to acknowledge individuals, groups, media, initiatives, and facilities who are making a difference by changing the culture for girls and women in the province. Finalists were chosen for each category and invited to attend the gala dinner to receive recognition for their work, even though only one finalist would be ultimately recognized.

2015- Following consultation workshops and being informed by the National Recreation Framework the **Shared Recreation Strategy** was formalized. The five goal areas included an Access and Inclusion goal to increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation. Specific actions targeted children and youth, individuals facing disparities and women and girls.

2016 – Recreation Nova Scotia board by special resolution altered their by-laws to promote gender parity in the boards composition by requiring no gender would have more than 60% representation on the board.

2018- The Communities Sport Recreation Division of the Department of Communities Culture and Heritage hired a consultant to **survey municipal recreation** to examine policy work and initiatives in support of the Shared Strategy. The response rate was 81%. The survey revealed that work in support of the access and inclusion goal was not widespread so that 4 of 5 municipal units did not have any inclusion and access policies in place nor were they planning to develop any. Jointly hosted sharing tours

took place across the province to identify supports needed to do work within the strategy and energize action.

2019-After years of work to establish an organization focused solely on addressing the issues related to inequities faced by girls and women in accessing meaningful sport and recreation opportunities, WomenActive Nova Scotia was established in 2015. During the first 4 years of operation great strides were being made, however striving to access appropriate levels of consistent **funding was a major barrier** to the operations of the organization. To address the issue, the Board of Directors made the very difficult decision to cease operation and negotiated with a long established female first organization, the YWCA, and have them assume responsibility to carry on some of the work. This would ensure that some of the important work of the association could continue but within a framework that had multiple other priorities. As such, the potential for the real systemic change that a dedicated provincial association could have made, was lost. Under the YWCA, LEAD (Leadership, Equity, Activity, Diversity) was developed to improve access to participation in sport and recreation opportunities for women and girls, non-binary and gender diverse individuals through inclusive, safe spaces and supports, primarily in the HRM.

2019 – Four years following the launch of the Shared Strategy to Advance Recreation, Recreation Nova Scotia and Communities Culture and Heritage undertook a **province wide sharing tour** with the overarching goal to connect with the field to communicate about resources, inspire collaboration and commitment to the Shared Strategy. A new focus of the Sharing Tour was to connect with Mi'Kmaq communities who had not been meaningfully involved in the strategy development. The aim of this focus of the tour was to listen and create connections previously missing. The tour took place in five of the six regions of the Province (with the Valley and beautiful South Shore joining together) and in three Mi'Kmaq communities. Recommendations flowing from the Sharing Tour provided ample direction to both organizations for future work particularly around Goal 2 Access and Inclusion. Recommending that learning about and acknowledging the barriers that exist in Recreation while important as a continual focus, also calls us to go boldly beyond barriers to create the change that is needed.

Note: Our aim is to enlighten the Board as to work carried on by the association in the past of which they may not have knowledge. We acknowledge that there is exciting EDI work being undertaken by RNS currently which we have not included in this historical perspective piece.

Questions for Consideration:

The Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia and the RNS Strategic Plan (2021-2024) appear to be guiding the current work of the association. In the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia, it states that the recreation sector in Nova Scotia fully embraces the national framework (2015) as the guiding framework.

The recreation sector in Nova Scotia has developed a set of provincial priorities associated with each of the 5 goals within the framework.

Shared Strategy Goal #2 states "increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation".

> **Nova Scotia Priority 2.1 Constraints to participation in recreation experiences for all children and youth are eliminated.**
>
> **Nova Scotia Priority 2.2: Participation in recreation by Nova Scotians facing disparities is significantly expanded. Diverse populations include individuals with visible differences such as sex, gender, age, and some abilities. Other differences may be invisible, such as sexual orientation, education, religious beliefs, socioeconomic status and mental health concerns that affect wellbeing.**
>
> **Nova Scotia Priority 2.3 Equitable participation by all women and girls.**

The Recreation Nova Scotia Strategic Plan (2021-2024) identifies 4 Key Priority Outcomes, one of which is that "Barriers to participation are eliminated or minimized so that all people in Nova Scotia have access to quality recreation opportunities and supportive recreation communities".

1. **What work is currently being carried out by the association to address the aforementioned priorities related to EDI?**

2. **Given that there have been countless initiatives undertaken within the province over the past 50 years to achieve similar goals, yet inequities in service and opportunity continue to leave specific groups disenfranchised and underserved, how might the present-day work bring about positive systemic change?**

3. **What work is RNS currently positioned to do better than any other organization to improve access and inclusion to quality recreation in Nova Scotia for all in keeping with the stated mission of "addressing the recreation needs of all Nova Scotians"?**

LEISURE AWARENESS, EDUCATION, AND ADVOCACY

In the 1960s and 70s, leisure education/counselling was housed primarily in the realm of therapeutic recreation, based upon an understanding that those individuals facing particular physical, mental, or emotional challenges would require special training in order to understand the importance of recreation in their lives, and to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to engage in meaningful forms of recreation. At that time, families, schools, and churches were considered the avenues through which most people learned about the importance of leisure and recreation. But throughout the 70's and 80's it became clear that the responsibility for leisure education, as the means of developing leisure literacy for society, must be the responsibility of those with the knowledge to do so, the recreation profession.

A profession is a field of work carried out by individuals who are accepted by the public as possessing specialized knowledge and skills in a particular field of study. Such knowledge is gained through education and training at a high level, and the professionals apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others. From the beginnings of the leisure/recreation profession, sharing that specialized knowledge for the benefit of individuals and communities has been a primary function of the professionals. That knowledge relates in part to the myriad of social, psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual benefits that accrue from participation in positive meaningful forms of recreation, in other words the meaningful ways in which individuals experience leisure. The profession has long acknowledged its role in sharing the power and potential of recreation, through various forms means promoting awareness of leisure, facilitating opportunities for leisure education in order that people can become more leisure literate, and advocating for recreation and leisure to decision makers.

Nova Scotia established the first provincial department in the country, responsible solely for recreation in 1973. As rationale, it was stated in the legislature that "Social problems generated by shorter work weeks, early retirement, concerns about low health standards across the province, and the need to provide an equal opportunity for all segments of society to get involved in recreation programs that can enrich their lives." A decade later the need for leisure education was more clearly articulated…"A major role of the department in the future is in the education of the public concerning the benefits of participation in recreation activities." The Future Recreation Context to 2001 report prepared for Nova Scotia Culture, Recreation and Fitness by Maritime Resource Management Service in 1983 states …"Most people are aware of physical (benefits of recreation) but not the social or psychological. Recreation can play a very valuable role in the next 20 years by assisting society to adapt to a changing economic situation and respond positively to the strains on communities". In the early years, those working within the provincial government department understood the importance of recreation to individuals, communities, and society. Most had a background in recreation, experience working within the profession, and a commitment to ensuring the benefits of recreation were well understood and considered at various government decision making tables.

All of the significant frameworks that have guided the work of the recreation profession have acknowledged this leisure education role (Interprovincial Recreation Statement (1983), National Recreation Statement (1987), The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities Report: Perspectives on

Recreation Development (1990), National Ministerial Paper: Sport, Recreation, and Fitness (2000), Nova Scotia Sport and Recreation Commission mandate (1994), and more recently, the Vision for Canadian Parks and Recreation (2005), the Power and Potential: The Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation Framework for Action (2008), the National Recreation Summit (2011), Pathways to Wellbeing: A Framework for Recreation in Canada (2014), and the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia (2015).

In 1995, the Interprovincial Conference of Ministers Responsible for Sport and Recreation passed a resolution to investigate the feasibility of developing a comprehensive national public leisure education program, and the development of appropriate resource materials and multimedia campaign to improve the quality of leisure education in the country. At the time, Nova Scotia was in the forefront in terms of advocating for, and undertaking initiatives in order to, promote opportunities for leisure awareness and education. In 1987, Debby Smith and Brenda Robertson received funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to investigate the existing state of Leisure Education research and practise in Canada. The results indicated that small pockets of activity were occurring in Alberta and Ontario, and that there was work being undertaken in Nova Scotia.

Dalhousie offered a course entitled *Leisure Education*, taught from the therapeutic perspective, the description of which read: This course is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills required to facilitate leisure education interventions designed to bring about desired changes in the leisure behaviour of individuals with disabilities. While the focus of the course is on leisure education, the overarching concepts of health, wellness, and health promotion will be incorporated into the course material. The course will address the following three broad areas: a) concepts and models of leisure education, b) content related to specific skills required for leisure involvement [leisure awareness, values clarification, social skills development, friendship development, stress management, assertiveness, leisure resources, decision making, etc.] and c) instructional and interactional techniques used in leisure education. In addition, students will have the opportunity to plan and facilitate leisure education experiences in class.

Acadia was the first university in the country to offer a course that focused on leisure education for all. A textbook was developed entitled simply the *Leisure Education Manual* which was then used at other academic institutions seeking to offer a similar focus. The description for the Acadia course entitled *Leisure Education Principles and Processes* read as follows: This course will focus on understanding the sources of leisure education in society today, the principles that underlie leisure education, and approaches used to educate various segments of the population about leisure. Content will include investigating the leisure functioning and knowledge of a specific group as well as the design, delivery, and evaluation of various types of leisure education programs. In this course, students demonstrate their knowledge of the social psychological psychology of leisure. This includes developing an understanding of how various psychological concepts and theories including needs, values, attitudes, and interests motivate leisure behaviour as well as various intrinsic and extrinsic constraints that might prevent participation unless they are successfully negotiated. Students are taught the principles of leisure education and techniques for designing, developing and delivering leisure education processes to various sectors of the population. Students must then make use of critical thinking skills to identify a specific population in need of leisure education, to determine which aspects of the process are most

applicable, and to develop and deliver an appropriate program or process to address the needs of a specific group. Students are also required to create a leisure education resource manual for the population that draws upon existing theory and knowledge as it relates to the social psychological needs of the group as a means of enhancing leisure functioning.

Leisure Awareness Working Group (LAWG): In 1982, Recreation Association of Nova Scotia and the NS Sport & Recreation Commission, the lead agencies in the province responsible for fostering leisure awareness/education, identified the fact that insufficient resources were being dedicated to the promotion of leisure and established the LAWG to focus attention on the issue. The high-profile committee consisted of representatives from RANS, NSSRC, NS Dept of Health and Fitness, Acadia, Mount Saint Vincent, Recreation Council on Disability of NS, Recreation Facility Association of NS, Municipal Recreation Departments, and Family Resource Centres. After 2 years of extensive work, the LAWG developed a comprehensive plan detailing the respective roles and responsibilities of RANS and NSSRC with regarding to leisure awareness. The report verifies definitively that those are in fact the two lead agencies to assume primary responsibility but does not designate with should be responsible for what specific work. The report clearly articulated direction for the two lead agencies to demonstrate their commitment to accept responsibility for leisure awareness, to prepare internally for the task, and to develop appropriate partners to carry out the work. This included 10 specific recommendations to position the lead agencies to assume responsibility for leisure awareness as central to their mandates. The appendices of the report included detailed information regarding the identification of specific target groups most in need of leisure awareness raising, situational analysis for various target groups including various age groups, politicians, and recreation service providers. Following the LAWG report, for a number of years, there existed a standing committee of the association initially called the Leisure Awareness Committee and later the Leisure Education Committee that carried out various initiatives depending upon the leadership of the association, and interest and expertise of committee members. Examples of type of projects undertaken by the committee include the following:
Leisure Awareness Kit: A project of the RANS Leisure Awareness Committee, the kit contained information related to leisure education and leisure services including a list of resources, a reference bibliography, career information, material on professional organizations, service guides, and a variety of reference materials. The kits were distributed to every municipal recreation dept in the province.

Leisure Crisis Kit: The RANS Leisure Awareness committee contracted the Recreation Resource Centre to develop this kit which contained 10 of the best leisure awareness/education resources available. This provided professionals with a mini resource library which could be used to quickly develop a presentation when called upon to do so by any organization, government department, school, community group, service club or other group interested in learning about leisure. These kits with sold through the RANS office.

Typical Town: In an effort to creatively promote the value of recreation, the President of RANS at the time, Eva Marks MacIsaac, and staff developed a physical model of a town with community assets that were movable. This visual representation displayed what recreation meant to communities and what communities would look like if recreation was not an integral part of quality community life. Typical Town toured the province and was used in many

presentations for municipal governments, community and provincial organizations.
Social Assistance Recipients Leisure Education Program: RANS contracted the Recreation Resource Centre to develop a two day leisure education module which would be incorporated into the provincial Social Assistance Recipients initiative. A workbook and Trainers Manual were also developed to accompany the program. An amazing development at the time for an allied provincial government department to recognize the power and potential of recreation.

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Pre Retirement Seminars: Recreation professionals, including the RANS Executive Director, were asked on occasion, to offer leisure education seminars as a component of pre retirement courses offered throughout the province.

PAL: During the 80s, the recreation profession provided input into the development of a course entitled Physically Active Living, to be implemented in Nova Scotia high schools, well before physical literacy was developed as a concept in the mid 1990s. The description is as follows: This full-credit course is designed to engage students in a wide range of physically active experiences, with an overall theme of exploring options and opportunities for being active for life, both in school and in their community. Physically Active Living encompasses both an activity component and a theory component, with an emphasis on engagement in physical activity. The activity component of the course is designed to provide opportunities for students to participate in the active experiences that engage youth in traditional and non-traditional forms of physical activity. The theory component of the course will enhance student understanding of healthy eating, injury prevention, mental and emotional health, and addiction prevention highlighting the connection between healthy living and being physically active. This course development acknowledged the need for physical recreation education that was not being covered in physical education.

Conference Sessions: Topics related to leisure awareness and education, with titles such as *Education for Leisure: A Community Perspective and The Wellness Wave: Leisure Education* have been a consistent theme of conference offerings over the years including as preconference workshops, regular sessions, and the focus of research symposium papers. The conference keynote session in 1991, was delivered by Dr Jean Mundy from Florida State University. The theme of the 1995 conference entitled The Power of Leisure was leisure awareness and education.

Spring Symposium: Numerous other professional development sessions in the province over the years have related to leisure education. On particular note was the 1995 Spring Symposium entitled *Leisure Education: The Road to the Future*. The purpose of the 3 day symposium was to provide participants with the knowledge and tools to be able to become effective facilitators of leisure education. Specifically, they learned the benefits of leisure education, the role of recreation professionals in being

leisure education leaders, how to build a leisure education programs for specific groups, became familiar with a myriad of leisure educations tools and resources, the importance of working with schools to incorporate leisure education into the curriculum, and how to work with families to make their homes more "leisure friendly". A report on the three day event stated the following…"This year, wide spread misconceptions of leisure education were discussed and participants gained insight into their role as leisure educators. The importance of leisure education as a means to address pressing social issues was explored, and those present developed a tool chest of techniques and resources to assist them in their newly discovered role. Until this symposium, recreation providers understood to varying degrees, the importance of leisure education, yet have given little consideration as to whose job it was to provide it. By the end, most had come to realize that not only were they themselves the ones who possessed the knowledge about leisure, but that this was in fact the collective responsibility of recreation professionals to ensure that all citizens had access to varying forms of quality leisure education".

The Power and Potential Leisure Awareness Strategy: Acting in its capacity of "providing leadership and a strong provincial voice…striving to inspire and support a diverse yet comprehensive network of partners committed to addressing the recreation needs of all Nova Scotians," in 2009, the association developed a strategy to increase awareness of the power and potential of recreation. Seven groups were identified as being most in need to awareness raising regarding and increased understanding of the power and potential of recreation: provincial government decision makers, municipal government officials, the general public, education system officials, institutional decision makers, those working within the sector, and those working in non governmental related sectors such as justice and economic development. Rationale for the identification of each of the groups was provided, along with details on specific strategies to be undertaken to most effectively impact each of those target groups.

Recreation Resource Centre: The NSRRC partnered with the association on a variety of leisure awareness/education initiatives over the years. In addition, the Centre housed an extensive collection of related materials, hosted a number of related workshops, and assisted with a various related research initiatives. Centre staff were involved in direct training such as conducting leisure education sessions at teacher inservice days, developed resources for specific groups, and developed and extensive leisure education programs. Some of this work was with the provincial and federal governments developing leisure education programs and undertaking staff training for correctional facilities, the belief being that many of those who commit crime would not have done so if they were able to satisfy their needs engaging in positive forms of recreation. The program they developed and piloted in Springhill Institution became a model for leisure education in the entire federal correctional system. Another example is a program developed for recovering alcoholics at a provincial treatment centre.

Steps To Connect: Through the leadership of Dr. Susan Hutchison at Dalhousie University and a number of colleagues at Dal, and recreation professionals on the south shore, a leisure education program was developed and evaluated that initially focused on extending chronic disease management strategies in community environments by exploring how recreation can help folks live well with health conditions. With funding from the Nova Scotia Research Foundation, practical workshop sessions, tools and resources were developed. Workshop

trainers were recruited and delivered sessions. Evaluations demonstrated this leisure education approach was successful in fostering reflection and self growth and creating a greater sense of connection to others and to communities. The program also proved its value with a variety of groups, including newcomers and those with mental health challenges. Many efforts were made to find a home to continue the refinement and promotion of this program with the most logical being RNS. This did not take place.

Advocacy has always been a fundamental role of the association, as the voice of recreation in Nova Scotia. There have been times throughout the past half century, when the provincial government of the day has attempted to diminish the importance of recreation by eliminating it as a named department, or combining it structurally with other units. In those cases, the association mounted a strong campaign to ensure that recreation continued to maintain a strong presence within the provincial government structure. Similarly, the association has worked closely with the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities over the years in various ways to advocate for recreation being an essential component of municipal service delivery. To that end, during elections within the province, the association prepared materials to candidates with clear messaging about the power and potential of recreation. Members used this resource to educate candidates on the benefits of recreation to their communities and to make sure that recreation remains a top priority election issue.

In 2004, a strategic plan was developed for the association which identified specific areas for focused attention and development. Over a 3 year period, a number of initiatives were undertaken to address each of the areas. During that time, the association was able to make progress by achieving the following types of outcomes:

- The Insurance Bureau forms a task force to look at affordability,
- Important changes were made to the municipal physical activity program,
- Government changes the unit name from just Physical Activity to Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation;
- The Minister commits to the development of a provincial recreation policy,
- Meetings held with government leaders and official resulted in the establishment of infrastructure to address volunteerism,
- The Access and Affordability report identified recommendations for the insurance industry and government

In 2007, advocacy was identified as a strategic priority of the association. A day long session on advocacy was organized, led by educator and activist Dr Wendy Bedingfield, to educate the membership about how to be an effective advocate for change. Seventy members participated. As a result, working groups were formed to address each of the topics raised during the session. Over a 6 month period, 3 working sessions were held around the province to further engage the membership in the discussion. As a result, it was determined that the over arching advocacy message would be that *recreation enhances the health and quality of life of individuals and communities throughout Nova Scotia*. Eight supporting statements were then developed including: 1) recreation is essential; 2) schools but be accessible and affordable after hours for recreation; 3) accessible recreation is important for children living in poverty; 4) the

benefits associated with physical activity are realized primarily through participation in recreation; 5) volunteers are essential to the provision of recreation and need to be nurtured and supported; 6) community recreation groups must have access to affordable insurance; 7) all levels of government need to better understand the nature and scope of recreation; and 8) quality public infrastructure is required to facility many forms of recreation. For each one of the 8 areas, background information was provided, position statements were developed, and recommendations were made for moving forward.

Throughout 2008-2009, an ad hoc committee carried out a series of membership engagement sessions across the province to gather input to be used in the development of a **new strategic framework** for the association. The process identified the need for the association to play a more significant role in facilitating and promoting leisure education in order to enhance self responsibility for leisure functioning. Further, the process identified specific strategies to be used by the association in addressing societal issues. Most of the strategies called upon the association to undertake such actions as to advocate for…, lobby…, promote…, and educate… rather than provide, facilitate, or lead. Increasingly, the association has become one of providing leadership to achieve specific ends by helping to mobilize the assets and resources of a "comprehensive network of partners".
In 2010, the **Recreation NS Advocacy Group** developed the power and potential article database to collect and disseminate information in support of the value of recreation to individuals, communities, and society.

In 2013-14 when the Department of Education sought input into their Education Review, RNS took advantage of the opportunity and submitted a document outlining the **importance of daily physical activity** along with physical activity within the afterschool time period.

In 2015-16 RNS along with other provincial and territorial associations and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), was been heavily engaged in lobbying efforts on behalf of the sector. One significant outcome was the **Federal Government's renewed commitment to some infrastructure investment** for sport and recreation facilities. The Federal Government's announcement came on the heels of the release of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' report card which confirmed that our sport and recreation infrastructure is becoming aged and outdated.

Closer to home, RNS advocated on behalf of its members in Province house in order to re-established the **Recreation Facility Development Grants** which were cut by the province. The RFDs were reinstated, preserving much needed grant funding for community facilities. During that same time, RNS lobbied the province to dedicate resources to work towards gender equity, the result of which was the establishment of **WomenActive**, with initial funding for two years from the Department of Communities Culture and Heritage. The initiative has a strong workplan and leadership that increased participation and leadership opportunities for women and girls in the physical activity, sport and recreation sector.

In 2018, the **Physical Literacy Instructor Program,** a set of training modules was designed by Sport for Life to certify recreation leaders as physical literacy instructors. Recreation Nova Scotia together with support from Communities, Culture and Heritage: Sport and Recreation Division decided to pilot the training in Nova Scotia to determine its impact on program delivery and its value to recreation providers. RNS has trained four groups of participants so far including, NSCC: Truro Campus, the Canada Games

Centre, Halifax County United Soccer Club and Millbrook First Nation. Training continued into the fall of 2018 with three more groups including Dalhousie University, EXCEL Afterschool Program and Halifax Regional Municipality Recreation.

Questions for Consideration

Recreation Nova Scotia currently acknowledges that it has a primary role in creating awareness of, educating about, and advocating for leisure/recreation.

The RNS Strategic Plan includes an impact Statement which states "What we are ultimately trying to accomplish in our community: People in Nova Scotia value and prioritize recreation for the positive impact it has in their lives, and have a deeper understanding of how it contributes to their health and wellbeing".

The stated Strategic Directions of the association include: Champion, promote and advocate for recreation as an essential element in building healthy, caring and vibrant communities; Facilitate the education and development of recreation professionals & volunteers; and Promote connectivity between recreation sector professionals, influencers and beneficiaries.

1. **In what specific ways is Recreation Nova Scotia currently engaged creating awareness of, educating about, and advocating for leisure/recreation?**

2. **Who else in the province plays a role in this work and what is the specific nature of their contributions?**

3. **What could/will be the outcome if the people in Nova Scotia do not value and prioritize recreation for the positive impact it has in their lives, and develop a deeper understanding of how it contributes to their health and wellbeing?**

4. **Who are the specific partners who can help RNS to achieve their stated strategic directions?**