

# SHARING TOUR SUMMARY REPORT

**SPRING-SUMMER 2019**



**RECREATION NOVA SCOTIA  
& NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES,  
CULTURE AND HERITAGE**

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# ABOUT RECREATION NOVA SCOTIA & COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & HERITAGE

## RECREATION NOVA SCOTIA

Recreation Nova Scotia is a provincial, not-for-profit organization established in 1998 resulting from a merger of the Recreation Association of Nova Scotia, the Recreation Council on Disability in Nova Scotia, and Volunteer Nova Scotia. In partnership with the volunteers and professional recreation community, Recreation Nova Scotia advocates on behalf of all Nova Scotians for recreation and leisure opportunities to promote the values and personal, social, economic, and environmental benefits of recreation and leisure.

Recreation Nova Scotia is committed to maintaining relationships with recreation practitioners, community organizations, government officials, students, the business sector and other professionals in the recreation field to ensure that all Nova Scotians have access to recreation activities that contribute to improved quality of life and healthy communities.

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & HERITAGE

## NOVA SCOTIA GOVERNMENT

The Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage is responsible for contributing to the well-being and prosperity of Nova Scotia's diverse and creative communities through the promotion, development, preservation and celebration of our culture, heritage, identity and languages, and; by providing leadership, expertise and innovation to our stakeholders.

# THE SHARING TOUR

The overarching goal of The Sharing Tour was to connect. Engagement with recreation professionals on a regular basis is important for both RNS and CCH. This maintains and strengthens relationships and connections at a provincial and community level. Through these connections, priorities, expertise and resources are developed and shared.

Between the launch of the strategy in 2015 and 2019 data was collected from sources such as the Municipal Recreation Study (2018), Provincial Recreation Organisation Assessments (2018), RNS Conference and Pre-Conference sessions and the passage of the Nova Scotia Accessibility legislation in 2017.

With this emerging information related to the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia, RNS and CCH recognised the need to connect with the recreation sector across the province and share this information.

The focus of The Sharing Tour was to connect with the sector to listen and understand the ongoing work across the province. In doing so, the hope was that this could help catalyse new action and better understand the ways in which RNS and CCH could support the sector.

## OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### 1. Communicate

Share and present information from key Recreation resources

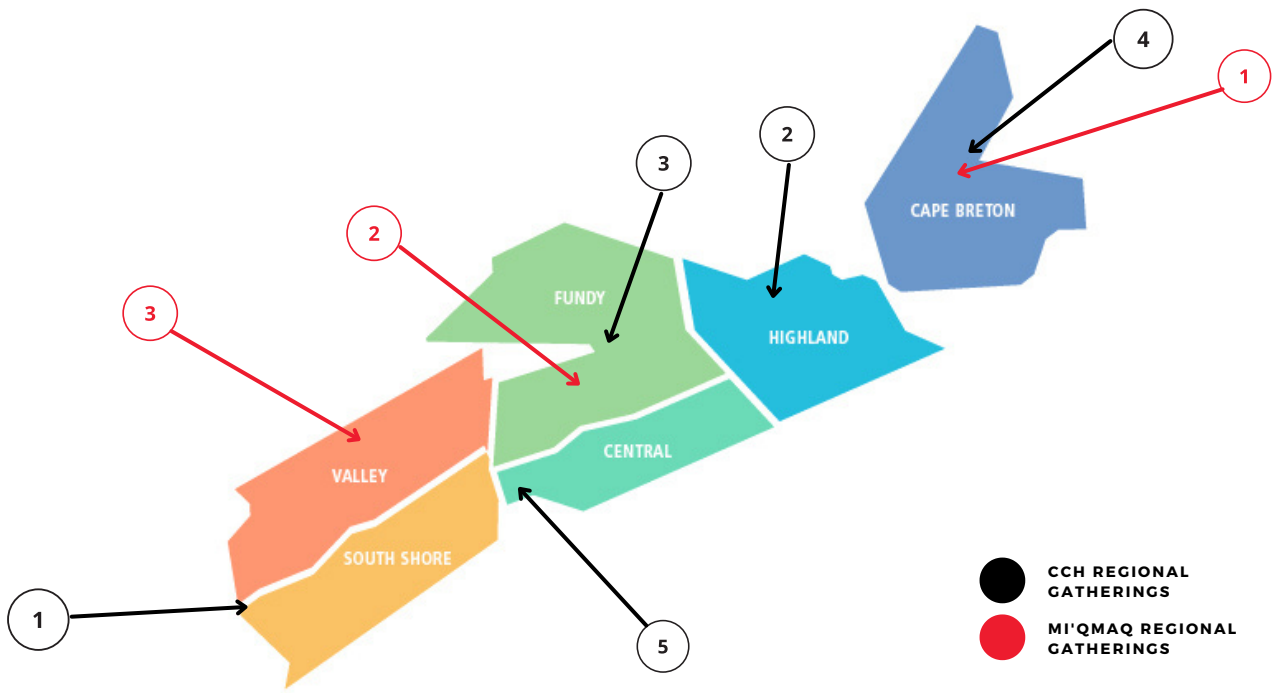
### 2. Collaborate

Create and advance connections to work together to advance recreation.

### 3. Commit

Reaffirm commitment to the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia with a focus on inclusion and access.





# WHERE WE WENT

## LOCATION AND DATES OF EACH MEETING

REGION & LOCATION	DATE
<b>SOUTH SHORE - VALLEY</b>	
1. YARMOUTH	APRIL 2019
<b>HIGHLAND</b>	
2. ANTIGONISH	APRIL 2019
<b>FUNDY</b>	
3. TRURO	MAY 2019
<b>CAPE BRETON</b>	
4. ST. ANN'S - GAELIC COLLEGE	MAY 2019
<b>CENTRAL</b>	
5. DARTMOUTH	JUNE 2019
<b>UNAMA'KI</b>	
1. WAGMATCOOK FIRST NATION	MAY 2019
<b>CENTRAL REGION</b>	
2. MILLBROOK FIRST NATION	MAY 2019
<b>WESTERN REGION</b>	
3. BEAR RIVER FIRST NATION	JUNE 2019

# EXECUTION

Over the course of the Sharing Tour - we connected with roughly 300 leaders, staff, volunteers, and key stakeholders in Recreation across the province.

Our focus was to have intentional engagement and connection around the Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia. The six regions of CCH was a natural way to divide up the sessions with the six regional offices supporting The Sharing Tour - Cape Breton, Central, Fundy, Highland, South Shore, Valley.

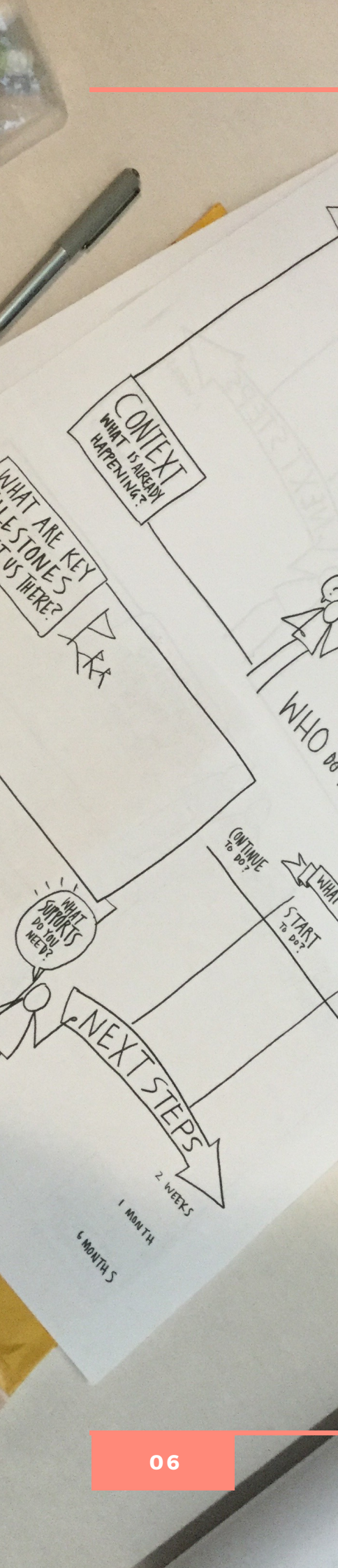
Another focus was on meaningful engagement around recreation with the Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia. When it came to planning the sessions themselves, it was acknowledged that the same meaningful engagement with Mi'kmaq communities did not happen throughout the process for formulating the Shared Strategy back in 2015.

With this in mind, the approach to Mi'kmaq communities needed to be different.

Without the background of engagement around the Shared Strategy, there was a need to better understand the role of recreation in Mi'kmaq communities.

The overarching goal of connecting remained the same but there was less focus on communicating information and more on making new connections that did not currently exist.

The relevance, or lack thereof, of the Shared Strategy in Mi'kmaq communities was one of the reasons the format for these gatherings needed to be different from those held in the CCH regions. It was also recognised that by taking a deeper dive to better understand recreation and its role in Mi'kmaq communities and culture there needed to be preparations put in place to ensure all those attending felt comfortable and safe to share their views. The interconnectedness of culture and recreation can involve community, personal and intergenerational trauma so conducting sessions in a respectful, culturally appropriate and safe way was a primary consideration for planning these sessions.



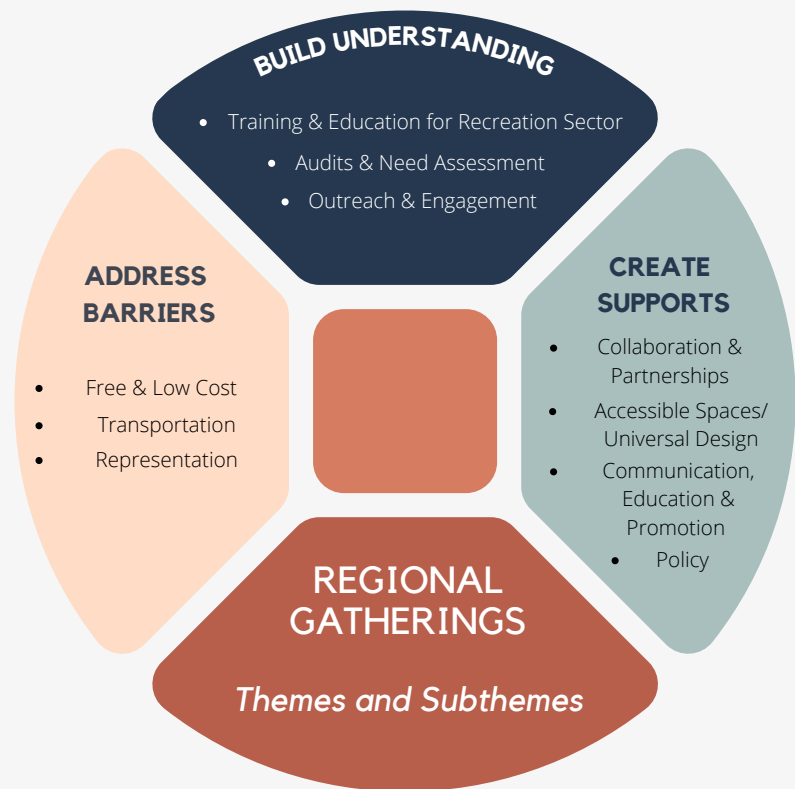
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# REGIONAL GATHERINGS

THE RESPONSES AND CONVERSATIONS FROM THE CCH REGIONAL GATHERINGS CAN BE CATEGORIZED INTO 10 THEMES SITTING IN 3 MAIN AREAS: BUILD UNDERSTANDING, ADDRESS BARRIERS, CREATE SUPPORTS.

the  
sharing  
tour

COMMUNICATE  
COLLABORATE  
COMMIT



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# BUILD UNDERSTANDING

## 1. TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR THE RECREATION SECTOR

GOAL AREAS: INCLUSION & ACCESS, CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, RECREATION CAPACITY

There is a clear need and desire for training and education, focusing on Goal 2 - Inclusion & Access and at all levels of the recreation delivery system from frontline leaders to management, decision makers, and municipal leaders. Further to that, some way of sign-posting to existing training and resources could be needed.

Education is needed around how to provide a welcoming environment for everyone including aspects of cultural safety, mental health considerations as well as physical and intellectual disabilities. It was acknowledged that trust and comfort are key to welcoming marginalised groups to programs. Education of resources and support for increasing awareness of inclusion and access as well as creating best practice documents were also highlighted.

## 2. AUDITS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

GOAL AREAS: ACTIVE LIVING, INCLUSION & ACCESS, CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Primarily focused on auditing the physical environment, accessibility audits are required for parks and facilities within municipalities including washrooms at outdoor spaces. Alongside that, gender equity assessments to identify why people may not be using recreation facilities.

The need for audits was also brought up with the goal of understanding current transit difficulties and opportunities. One of the barriers identified in accessing recreation across the province is transportation and by auditing connectivity within communities there can be progress made to connect everyone with recreational opportunities and alleviate some of the challenges of transportation.

Needs Assessment was highlighted as a method for gleaning information on who needs what in terms of programming but particularly for seniors and youth. There are gaps and disconnects between existing projects and a better understanding of the needs of the community would help - this links well with Outreach & Engagement.

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# BUILD UNDERSTANDING

## 3. OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

### GOAL AREAS:

A large part of 'Building Understanding' arose from the need to outreach to all in the community that we seek to serve and provide connections for engagement.

"Ask don't assume - to discover and understand diverse needs"

In some cases, this may involve collaboration across sectors as a holistic approach to healthy connected people and communities. There is a need to hear first person voices and to hear from those representing diverse lived experiences in order to build understanding and to create networks.

Community engagement was a common theme and it is recognised that empowering communities and creating opportunities for peoples' voices to be heard is important. There were also themes of connecting directly with priority populations and offering support for participation as well as finding new, innovative ways to connect with people.

A vertical strip on the left side of the page shows a wall with handwritten text in black marker. The text is partially visible and reads "WHAT IS HAPPENING IN RECREATION IN NOVA SCOTIA?".

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# ADDRESS BARRIERS

## 1. FREE AND LOW COST

GOAL AREAS: ACTIVE LIVING, INCLUSION & ACCESS, CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, RECREATION CAPACITY

Providing free or low-cost opportunities rose to the top of many conversations. Financial barriers to participation were cited as being one of the biggest barriers people in Nova Scotia face to accessing recreation and there is a need for a review or redirecting of funding in order to help create more free/affordable activities. Additionally, there is desire to see greater promotion and access to existing free activities such as equipment loan programs and parks and trails. There was a recognition and appreciation for venues such as the Emerald Oval in Halifax for the value they provide in welcoming people of all ages and abilities with free recreational opportunities.

## 2. TRANSPORTATION

GOAL AREAS: ACTIVE LIVING, INCLUSION & ACCESS, CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

The issue of transportation was a common theme with part of the barrier people face with regards to transportation linked more generally to the cost barriers of accessing recreation. This is partly due to transportation in many cases not being available directly to recreation spaces such as trail heads, parks, beaches, camping areas.

When looking at active transportation, improvements to infrastructure are required in order to make this possible more widely. This includes safe sidewalks, safe space for cycling, as well lighting improvements and flat surfaces for wheelchair users and those with walkers and strollers.

There is a notable push from the recreation sector for greater advocacy around transportation with community design in mind to support access to both the natural and built environments whilst acknowledging creative approaches may need to be adopted. For example, more community led or community driven initiatives to alleviate the barriers transportation poses such as rideshare and carpool systems.

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# ADDRESS BARRIERS

## 3. REPRESENTATION

GOAL AREAS: INCLUSION & ACCESS, CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, RECREATION CAPACITY

A very clear recognition on the importance of diversification (ethnicity and gender) on staff teams, boards and leadership positions. As part of a commitment to diversifying the workforce and boards there was a theme of building this requirement into governance bylaws.

When considering the promotion and marketing of recreational opportunities, improving the diversity of people represented in this was seen as important. As was the impact that hearing from people from diverse backgrounds. Success stories can be impactful and having these come from change makers or champions representing diverse lived experiences makes a difference.

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# CREATE SUPPORTS

## 1. COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

GOAL AREAS: INCLUSION & ACCESS, CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, RECREATION CAPACITY.

There is a need to work collaboratively, with recreation making up part of a holistic approach to health in Nova Scotia. The breadth of recreation spans across sectors such as health, culture, education, justice, transport, sport. With that in mind, there are tremendous opportunities for partnerships and for collaboration to take place across these sectors.

A key part of Collaboration & Partnerships that came across was sharing. This applies to equipment and resources that are on offer as well as sharing of experience and ideas. Partnerships can play such a huge role and there are some fantastic examples of how these have helped support recreation.

Collaboration and Partnerships links well again with Building Understanding – it was noted that in order to collaborate or partner there is a need to outreach to different groups and build relationships initially to potentially help forge partnerships.

## 2. POLICY

GOAL AREAS: INCLUSION & ACCESS, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, RECREATION CAPACITY.

Particularly related to Inclusion & Access, having mandatory and enforced policy was a key topic of discussion. Not only should such policies express a continual commitment to inclusion and access but also be developed and/or adopted at all levels. Policy should be in place to target the root causes of exclusion and allow for equal opportunity.

Under the 'Policy' area there was also calls for policy around Active Transportation as well as play but with an equity lens. Ensuring that these policies don't just serve those in wealthy areas but are in place to ensure active transportation to work, school, and play for all citizens.

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# CREATE SUPPORTS

The ways in which gender equity and policy are related was also a common topic with the benefits of policy in this area being noted. As highlighted in the 'Address Barriers' section there is a need for better representation on staff and boards with gender being a part of that.

## **3. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION & PROMOTION**

GOAL AREAS: CONNECTING PEOPLE & NATURE, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, RECREATION CAPACITY

From all regions across the province, there were some fantastic conversations about exciting, positive projects, initiatives, partnerships and ideas. What we, as a sector, need to improve is how well we celebrate our successes and communicate our work. It was noted that whilst opportunities exist, we could do better at communicating what exists and for whom.

Increased and/or improved promotion for parks and trails was an important point across the sessions. Parks and trails often offer an accessible recreation space and opportunity but targeting communications to different audiences could help promote what is already there. As part of that, and specifically related to trails, there needs to be clear information about how physically accessible places are.

When looking to improve participation and access for all, there are barriers people face specifically around language. When distributing messages or promotions there is missed opportunity often to include Mi'kmaw and other non-English languages as part of this. The importance of representing diverse languages and communities comes into play when communicating to the public.

Lastly, in order to assist with finding the correct information, there were ideas around 'recreation navigators' to help individuals and families. Online platforms such as Connect.ca with databases of opportunities are useful with 311 another notable resource for sharing information.

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# CREATE SUPPORTS

## 4. ACCESSIBLE SPACES/ UNIVERSAL DESIGN

GOAL AREAS: INCLUSION & ACCESS, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

With the Accessibility Act being passed in Nova Scotia in 2017, much of the discussion focused on the implications of this legislation. With changes due to take place by 2030 at the latest, the implementation of practices in preparation for this were a common topic of discussion.

It is clear when designing built and natural environments there needs to be a community design approach to support access. The accessibility of facilities should go beyond physical accessibility, ensuring spaces and places are inclusive for all (for example gender inclusive). Ensuring accessibility for those with visual impairments using tactile signage was also noted as something which should be standard practice and expected for users.

Going beyond physical accessibility again, there was a clear desire to ensure that our messaging and promotions represents diverse languages and communities e.g. signage in Mi'kmaw.

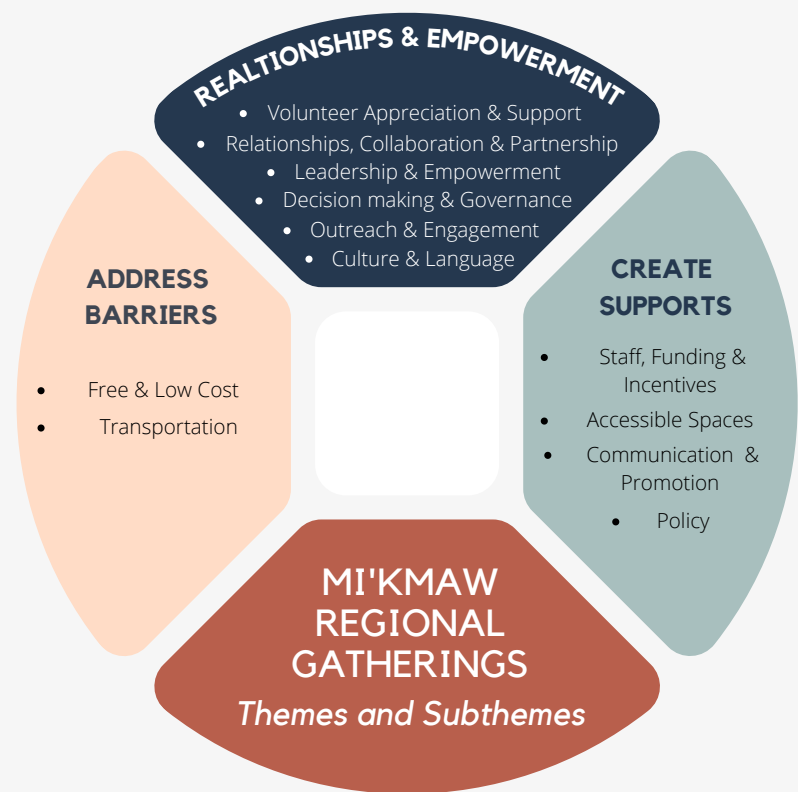
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# MI'KMAW REGIONAL GATHERINGS

THE RESPONSES AND CONVERSATIONS FROM THE MI'KMAW REGIONAL GATHERINGS CAN BE CATEGORIZED INTO 12 THEMES SITTING IN 3 MAIN AREAS: RELATIONSHIPS & EMPOWERMENT, ADDRESS BARRIERS, CREATE SUPPORTS.

## the sharing tour

COMMUNICATE  
COLLABORATE  
COMMIT

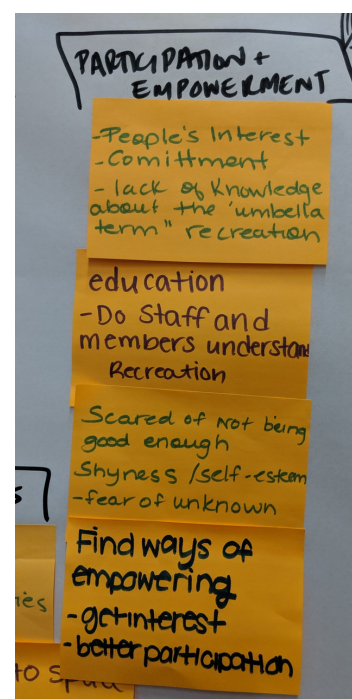


# RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERMENT

## 1. LEADERSHIP & EMPOWERMENT

GOAL AREAS: INCLUSION & ACCESS, SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS, RECREATION CAPACITY

Amongst the gatherings there was strong support for the existing MPAL (Mi'kmaw Physical Activity Leadership) Program for providing leadership for recreation within communities. However, it can become problematic when those leaders are overloaded with too heavy a reliance placed on them. There could be opportunities to assist new leaders with intentional support and training. Empowerment of community members was seen as a step that could help improve peoples' lives through recreation - a broad sense of fear and lack of self-esteem was noted as a barrier to participation, particularly with youth.



## 2. DECISION MAKING AND GOVERNANCE

GOAL AREAS: INCLUSION & ACCESS, RECREATION CAPACITY

Ensuring there is community engagement throughout the decision-making process was an important topic, whether it be by utilising youth councils, community groups, surveys, or more formal recreation committees with support from council/youth/elder mentors. Community involvement is seen as a way that could help place more value on sport and recreation opportunities that exist.

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# RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERMENT

## 3. OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The focus on Outreach and Engagement happened when looking at communication within communities. As with decision making above, there is a need to ensure youth and elders are both involved with decision making and ensuring their voice is heard. Some people are left out and excluded – in order to reach them there may need to be new approaches to communication, peer to peer opportunities, and support for existing MPALs to not be the only voice for recreation opportunities.

## 4. RELATIONSHIPS, COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIPS

A large topic of conversation, as with Outreach and Engagement, there is a need for better collaboration within communities, between communities, and beyond. While some regions see close collaboration between communities, particularly Unama'ki, other areas can see the benefit from closer ties in order to pool resources with some examples given around collaboration for the Mi'kmaw Summer Games.

Recognition that every community is different and that there are varied resources, both natural and built e.g. lakes, pools, gyms, across communities emphasises the need to work together.

External relationships have proved successful for creating more opportunities but with many departments working on varied projects there is a need for a whole community approach instead of independent, siloed style of working. Conversation took place around the potential of a Mi'kmaw Recreation Organisation, more recreation summits both provincially and regionally, and a focus on education around Indigenous systems and organisations.

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# RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERMENT

## 5. CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

As highlighted as part of the Empowerment area, there is a need to decolonise communities and help instill a sense of pride and identify - L'nui'sultinej (Let's Speak Mi'kmaq) was given as an example of creating a surge around learning the Mi'kmaq language.

It was highlighted that there can be difficulty accessing funding for cultural recreation as well as there being limited research into the benefits of cultural recreation.

This links with the calls to action of the TRC which was a topic of discussion - movement has been slow on the TRC although there were some highlighted examples of cultural activities being a major part of programs that worked well e.g. Moose Camp in Unama'ki and Bear River's 'Finding our Roots' girls youth group. There is work to be done for people to see the value in cultural activities and for funding to support them. The value of culturally specific activities and knowledge of how they fit into the broader umbrella of recreation is lacking.

## 6. VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION / SUPPORT

Whilst there was a big outpouring of support for all the hard work volunteers are putting into the betterment of recreation and sport in Mi'kmaw communities, it's clear some volunteers have struggled with burnout and there is a need for greater support for these individuals. There is no shortage of value placed on recreation but there are challenges that exist around recruiting volunteers and ensuring they are receiving the necessary support. Some ideas were put forward on hosting 'Volunteer Appreciation' events as well as what sort of honorarium might be appropriate.

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# RELATIONSHIPS AND EMPOWERMENT

There was an acknowledgement of the differences and uniqueness between communities. Specific to the delivery and experience of recreation, the MPAL role that exists in most communities can be leaned on quite heavily in many cases and volunteer support for them at certain times of year and at certain events was an area of discussion. Highlighting community champions and offering support to them via Chief and Council was put forward as a potential solution alongside other ideas around volunteer incentives.

## ADDRESS BARRIERS

### 1. FREE AND LOW COST

The cost barriers associated with participation in recreational activities was high on the agenda for many conversations. Funding opportunities can help alleviate this in some cases, provided those opportunities are communicated to the appropriate people. At times, there is a need for support with putting together proposals and funding opportunities. Ensuring a better connection between the community or MPAL where applicable and those providing the funding is seen as something that would help this process.

Another thread related to ensuring funding is available emphasised the importance of ensuring there is funding support for cultural activities. Traditional activities that can be part of daily culture and help build empowered individuals and communities are becoming in higher demand. There is a need for greater flexibility with how recreational opportunities are funded to allow greater opportunities for culturally specific recreation.

Sustainability of funding opportunities was lamented as some appear to be 'band-aid' or short term solutions. Specific policy changes were discussed to reallocate funding to expand support for culturally specific sport and recreation opportunities.

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# ADDRESS BARRIERS

## 2. TRANSPORTATION

One key area of success noted was hosting of programs and events locally. Allowing for levels of participation to help people ease into new activities and having those organised consistently can work. However, when not hosted locally the issue of transportation presents problems for many to access recreational opportunities.

In some regions and communities, shuttle busses have provided a good solution. The problem, however, can be exacerbated by the differences between facilities and infrastructure available as well as sometimes geographical distances between communities. Ensuring accessible access to space locally, especially for unstructured recreation, can help provide opportunities closer to home.

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# CREATE SUPPORTS

## 1. POLICY

Support for recreation and opportunities could be increased through policy support. Policy has the ability to permeate a number of aspects of recreation. As mentioned in the 'Free and Low Cost' area, sustainable funding is important and this could be achieved through policy change. Certain funds were cited that exist within communities that could be expanded or altered to support more aspects of sport and recreation.

The idea of improving cultural integration and identity can be supported through policy. Language immersion and allowing more to learn and use the Mi'kmaq language could be implemented through policy change. Importantly, policy alone forms just one piece of the puzzle for supporting improvements in recreation but can clear the path and prompt action.

A Shared Strategy for Advancing Recreation in Nova Scotia exists and was cited as a policy support but there currently lacks a Mi'kmaq Provincial Strategy on Recreation. Formulating a specific Mi'kmaq strategy or provincial/regional policy could support the education, value and understanding of recreation in Mi'kmaq Communities.

## 2. COMMUNICATION & PROMOTION

Communication was a hot topic in many discussions - it takes many forms and can influence recreation in many positive ways. Communication between different departments, organisations, levels of government - there is a need to build relationships through strong communication. Specifically, when referring to the MPAL program, it would help if that staff member isn't the only communication route to communities from organisations or provincial government. For communities without an MPAL, the connection to other organisations is harder as a result.

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# CREATE SUPPORTS

Communication within communities and promoting recreation experiences was discussed with a need to ensure communication is tailored to the needs of different generations. This builds on the relationships that need to be built as well as utilising the potential of planning committee, recreation committees etc. Communication and promotion should be open and varied.

## 3. ACCESSIBLE SPACES

Support around ensuring there are Accessible Spaces for recreation comes in a variety of forms. Some forms of the broad term 'accessibility' have been covered already in the 'Addressing Barriers' section which referred to both the cost and transportation barriers.

It was highlighted that across communities there can be a difference in infrastructure. This applies to Accessible Spaces with the same spaces not being available to everyone and inconsistencies meaning there is a need for greater support around physical accessibility.

There was discussion around ensuring spaces are accessible for young people and that communities would benefit from a strong focus on youth - this may be a training gap. Ensuring accessible spaces means working with young people to have youth driven programs as well as involvement with schools.

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# CREATE SUPPORTS

## 4. FUNDING AND INCENTIVES

As mentioned above, cost can be a barrier to a number of recreation opportunities. However, there is a need for funding support in other ways to support recreation as part of broader initiatives - one example being funding to take on the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. Again, similar to above when referring to Volunteer Recognition, there was significant discussion around how best to reward volunteers and potentially having sustainable funding to support apprentices, support for the existing MPALs, and paid assistants to relieve the workload on volunteers who are at risk of being burned out. In general, lack of funding or access to funding was a topic that attracted a lot of discussion.

Incentives can come in the form of money or prizes and when looking ahead to solutions to improve recreation experiences, incentives were raised frequently. This can mean incentives for participation as a way to encourage people to take that first step, or for volunteers in order to encourage people to take on those roles.

## SUMMARY

### REFLECTIONS AND FURTHER ACTIONS

Across the 3 Regional Mi'kmaw Gatherings, the closing circles emphasized a strong need to continue to support each other within communities and between communities and work together. There is a lot of learning to be done with regards to opportunities that exist. There are many new ideas and it can seem daunting to start, embracing and being conscious of this when starting out can help take those first steps.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information collected, there are a few stand out recommendations to be considered for the recreation sector in Nova Scotia.

## REGIONAL FOCUS

The needs of the regions across Nova Scotia can differ, specifically regarding Goal 2 - Inclusion & Access. Priorities change across communities and regions depending on circumstances such as economic challenges or cultural diversity.

## TRAINING & EDUCATION

The sector seeks continual training and development so there is a need to ensure relevant opportunities are readily available. Maintaining connections with the sector to identify needs is key so that the training and education can be responsive.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout all sessions of The Sharing Tour the broad theme of building and maintaining relationships was highlighted and discussed. As a sector, recreation should continually strive to strengthen connections within but also seek to build relationships across sectors where there is overlap.

## INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY

Learning about and acknowledging the barriers that currently exist in recreation should be a continual focus. However, attention must also be given to the ways we can create change and not just acknowledge the barriers but also build knowledge on how to address them.

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# STAFF & TEAM MEMBERS

THANK YOU TO THE STAFF AND PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS, AS WELL AS CCH REGIONAL OFFICES AND MI'KMAW AND MUNICIPAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEADERS (MPALS) THAT SUPPORTED THE SHARING TOUR



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