



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

Briefing Note

To: Council

File No.: 7710-01

From: Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

Date: November 27, 2024

Subject: Research Project - College and Community Social Innovation Fund Grant

PURPOSE: To inform Council that Langara College was successful in its grant application to the College and Community Social Innovation Fund and will be proceeding with its research project in partnership with Courtenay Recreation and other community research partners.

BACKGROUND:

At the February 28, 2024 Council meeting, Council provided its support and commitment to participating in Langara College's Department of Recreation Studies research proposal to the College and Community Social Innovation Fund. The research will be conducted with other community research partners in B.C. including the B.C. Parks and Recreation Association (BCRPA), the City of Burnaby, and the South Asian Community Hub.

The application was successful and Langara College was recently awarded \$355,000 to conduct a three-year research project to explore the participation of racialized and immigrant communities in public recreation services in British Columbia. This is an area that remains under-researched in Canada. Yue-Ching Cheng is the lead researcher on the project, with a team comprised of Emma Courtney, Keith Dormond, and Carolyn Wing representing a wide range of academic disciplines such as Recreation Studies, Social Work, Early Childhood Education, and EDI to support the research work.

DISCUSSION:

Research Project Overview

The research will investigate the barriers that racialized and immigrant communities face in accessing public recreation, with the ultimate goal of developing initiatives that are co-created by racialized and immigrant communities working in tandem with municipal staff to improve access and social integration. The project focuses on using culturally sensitive recreation to enhance belonging, social cohesion, and community bonds.

The project is proposed to occur over a period of three years (2024 to 2027) with the following major project objectives

1. Understanding how immigrant and racialized communities define recreation compared to native-born citizens.
2. Identifying barriers to accessing recreation services by immigrant and racialized groups
3. Exploring the implementation of an engagement philosophy based on Belonging, Dignity, Justice, and Joy ([Davis, 2021](#)) for more effective EDI initiatives.
4. Creating training to support municipal staff in supporting increasingly diverse communities in BC
5. Documenting a co-creation process that increases public recreation access for equity-deserving groups by empowering them in the initiative-making process.

Expected benefits include a better understanding of recreational needs and barriers faced by racialized and immigrant communities, improved access to services, and stronger societal integration. The project also aims to generate scalable models of collaboration between municipalities and immigrant communities, while

acknowledging the intersectionality within these groups (e.g., disabilities, gender, religion). The findings could also promote public recreation as a career path for these communities.

The project will also look to understand the unique needs of smaller and rural cities in providing recreation services to a rapidly diversifying community. The City of Courtenay is one of two research site locations, with the other site being the City of Burnaby.

Understanding that residents in the Comox Valley area may traverse municipal boundaries to seek out recreation activities, the Langara research team will also look to engage racialized and immigrant residents from surrounding communities, as well as other community partners that interact and provide services for these groups such as North Island College.

Research Project Timeline

The project is expected to occur over three years, with the phases of work as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 – Research Project Timeline

	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY
Year 1 (Sept 2024 - Aug 2025)	<i>Phase 1 (September 2024 - March 2025)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with partners to identify local stakeholders, develop engagement strategies, surveys, focus group, and obtain ethics approval Researcher and Student Training
	<i>Phase 2 (April 2025 - August 2025)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary engagement with local immigrant / racialized communities and local municipal recreation staff to gather data (surveys, interviews, and focus groups) Outcome mapping
Year 2 (Sept 2025 – Aug 2026)	<i>Phase 3 (September 2025 - December 2025)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student-researcher training Data analysis of Phase 2 baseline data Design EDI training for municipal staff
	<i>Phase 4 (January 2026 - August 2026)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary findings from Phase 2 & 3 shared with recreation sector through BCRPA, with partners and their community stakeholders Researcher Training Host EDI training for municipal recreation staff Engage in access initiative co-creation process
Year 3 (Sept 2026 - Aug 2027)	<i>Phase 5 (September 2026 – August 2027)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of EDI training and Co-creation process Generalize and document co-creation process Document generated initiatives Share findings with partners, local community groups, public recreation sector through the BCRPA, and allied sectors through <i>Pathways to Prosperity</i> conference.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

OCP, 2022

Goal 7: A City for Everyone:

Courtenay will ensure equity is integrated into planning and design considerations, so that everyone – including racialized people, newcomers, 2SLGBTQIAP, women, persons with disabilities, children, youth, and elders – are equal participants in the city and in city building.

Goal 9: Investing in Relationships:

The City of Courtenay will value the contributions of all its citizens, nurturing and practicing a culture of proactive involvement in local government reconciliation and all community decisions by creating new avenues for community participation and action.

Community Participation

- CP 1 The City will take a proactive community participatory approach for the purpose of encouraging open dialogue and co-creating inclusive decision-making processes.
- CP 8 The City will explore partnerships as strategies to achieve OCP vision, goals and policies. Partnerships will employ innovative and structured approaches to ensure all parties are involved and mutually supported to maximize individual and collective efforts.

Parks and Recreation

- Objective 4: The parks and recreation system exemplifies leadership in reconciliation, climate action, equity, and community well-being through its services, programs, and partnerships.
- Objective 5: Partnerships are in place to achieve parks and recreation objectives.

Social Infrastructure:

- SI 1 Develop and employ a locally-relevant framework for assessing social, equity, and health impacts in policy, development, program and service decisions.
- SI 2 Undertake a city-wide equity audit to identify social inequities and barriers to access in municipal service delivery and develop a strategy to inform decision-making processes related to planning and service allocation in the community. Ensure anti-discrimination, diversity, and inclusion form part of any new policies and programs as well as equitable access to all City services based on needs.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Participation in the proposed research project does not have any direct financial impacts. The value of in-kind contributions in staff time and facility access is estimated at \$20,100.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

Recreation, Culture, and Community Services will lead the City's involvement in the proposed project. The scope of the project is limited to Courtenay Recreation and Community Services and will require in-kind contributions of staff time and meeting space from 2024 through to 2027.

The City of Courtenay will be providing in-kind contributions in the form of staff time to participate in surveys and interviews, as well as providing local knowledge and information. Additionally, staff will participate in the EDI training that will be developed, and participate in the co-creation process that will facilitate the creation of initiatives to increase access to recreation services in the community. The City will also make facility space available to facilitate in person meetings and workshops.

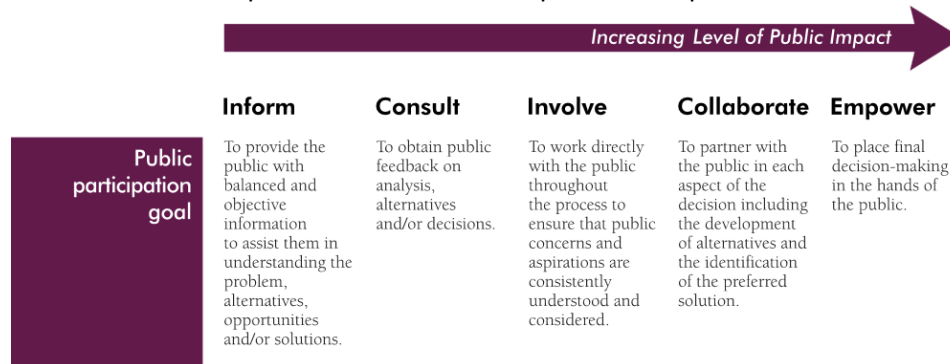
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Social Infrastructure - Review City operations with a social equity, reconciliation and anti-racism lens and develop corporate policy
- Parks and Recreation - Review recreation programs and engage with community on current and future needs, changing demographics

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Langara College will lead any public engagement and communications efforts. Staff would inform the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation as required:



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RECOMMENDATION: THAT Council receive the “Research Project - College and Community Social Innovation Fund Grant” briefing note.

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