



STREAMKEEPERS MODULE 10

Community Awareness

PROJECT APPROVAL

- Not required

TRAINING

- Not necessary

TIME COMMITMENT

- A few days per year

NUMBER OF PEOPLE

- 2 or more

TIME OF YEAR

- Year round

This module involves finding effective ways to share your group's knowledge of local habitat and wildlife.

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Pêches et Océans
Canada

Fisheries and Oceans
Canada

Canada 

Welcome to Streamkeepers

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans Community Involvement Program provides the Streamkeepers training modules. These modules encourage “hands on” environmental activities in watersheds in British Columbia. Volunteer groups, First Nations, schools, and individuals are using this material to monitor and restore local waterways. Your local Fisheries and Oceans Community Advisor can provide more information.

Project Purpose

This module describes projects and introduces tools that will help you share your knowledge of the local habitat and inhabitants, express concerns and provide information about the watershed and stream health, as well as, communicate your group’s goals to other members of your community:

1. **Messaging**
2. **Online Communication Tools**
3. **Brochures, Newsletters, Presentations**
4. **Community Meetings**
5. **Public Displays and Signage**

Introduction

Community awareness activities primarily endeavour to inform local citizens about the work of the group and to encourage people to care for their watershed. Sometimes these communications can lead to important dialogue with citizens and local decision makers, as well as, drawing more people in to become active group members. Each of us has an obligation to help take care of the environment. Some people might say, “think globally, and act locally”. Community awareness projects remind people that aquatic habitats are important. When residents of a community are given enough information, they often support decisions about land use that protect the environment. Community awareness projects let people know how commonplace activities can damage aquatic habitats. Some projects provide information about environmentally friendly practices and products that help protect these natural resources.

The Watershed

Many common urban activities affect our streams. For example, property development, transportation, car washing, and garden pesticide usually add sediment and contaminants to streams through runoff. The impact can be severe when the cumulative effect to an entire watershed is considered. Large scale changes to the landscape often grab our attention, yet smaller scale but more plentiful changes can collectively, cause more damage than major developments. Various government agencies try to limit damage to the environment by regulating major urban, industrial, agricultural, forestry, and mining developments.

Public awareness projects can help heighten interest in current development proposals, land use decisions, and other activities that affect watersheds. Informed citizens are more likely to support your efforts and become involved in the local decision making process. Sometimes you may find yourself dealing with difficult issues, but you will draw more support for your cause if you can maintain a positive attitude.

Established groups with well-defined goals and objectives can organize these projects most successfully. Such groups also have important contacts and resources within the community. Research local groups to find one that is a good fit for you or there are several references at the end of this module that can guide you in organizing a local Streamkeepers group.

At events before you start for the day, thank everyone for attending. Share quickly but clearly the tasks to be undertaken, how you found the need to take on this task and what the desired outcomes will be. Safety talk, have fun, ask questions and we hope to see you at our next event as well. State time and place. On a table you could have a sign in sheet, what today's task is, steps to complete the task, desired outcome, take away page with your groups URL, facebook and the

Project Guidance and Approval

Contact your local Community Advisor for guidance and information before starting a major project. He or she may provide resources and contacts with government agencies or other groups already involved in watershed protection.

Messaging, Tools and Communications Planning

It is important to consider your goals when you choose a project. Some community awareness projects inform a wide audience. Others target specific groups. Meet with a small group who know your organization well and brain storm what your group does, who they are, what they want to accomplish. Once you have the foundational pieces such as Mission statement and objectives you have the workings of a communications plan.

In your overall communications plan, you may wish to consider why you are communicating:

1. Promoting your group overall.
2. Attracting new volunteers.
3. Ensuring your volunteers are recognized and encouraged.
4. Showcasing the data your group gathered on a project or event (whether numbers who attended, trees planted, fish counted, water quality info...)
5. Raising profile for fund raising.
6. Highlighting a local watershed concern or positive outcome.

Who will communicate on behalf of your group. Administration of your groups website, social media accounts, media liaison and consultations where a member is speaking as the face of the group should be thought through. While often there are offers to build your website for free or be the lead on social media posts you will want to have guidelines as to the process to do this so as to have the groups intentions clear. A solid foundation of knowing who you are and what your goals are will help to determine the awareness campaigns and projects needed to get your desired outcomes. A balanced viewpoint with sciencebased monitoring data will help you stay grounded on your messaging.

Internal communications is vital. Find a way that works for your group, to easily allow all your members to be aware of the activities and undertakings being done under your groups banner. Give lots of notice as to upcoming volunteer opportunities to allow your volunteers to plan to take part.

Make a tick table for this as an event planning tool? Reasoning for the event, what will the people be doing? How can they come prepared? What day? What time? catchy title, age range? What will be the positive benefit to the stream? Call to action to attend or donate or sign up for upcoming events. URL for your website and other social media sites.

External communications, your communications plan should have regular updates to keep your group engaged with the broader community. Keep your vision, works and future objectives up to date and in the public eye. Having a good relationship with your local media will help to achieve this goal. Local media stories are often picked up by other larger media outlets.

Media – are you promoting an event? Bringing attention to a concern? Each story should have a community attractor, solid facts and a call to action. Media for an event may be a staged photo of the activity you will be undertaking

If for a watershed issue or concern – Share how your group determined the problem, who you have worked with to address it. Why you are bringing it to the public. What can be done and what is the hoped for outcome? URL for website and FB

Share your story with the reporter or photographer. If you don't want to answer a question or are unsure of answer, say so. After the interview thank them for their time and pass them your prepared information sheet of facts in bullet point form. Add contact info, URL for group website and Social media sites. An online calendar that is kept up to date with your activities and filled in with like minded community events will keep your audience engaged, informed and able

Strategy No. 1

Road Signs

Signs can be placed at stream crossings. A simple sign that includes the stream name, a fish symbol, and a short conservation message is best. A well formatted template for the signs has been established for BC. The signs draw attention to the streams as people pass. This is especially useful on a small or culverted stream, where there is no bridge to remind us of the stream visually. It also shows that you are in community that cares about their watershed. Many people do not realize that small headwater creeks are easily damaged yet provide important fish and wildlife habitats.

Project Guidance and Approval

Contact your municipality and the B.C. Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) for approval and cooperation. Get permission from landowners, such as other agencies, private property owners, or First Nations Councils. Check for local guidelines on sign design and placement. These often differ from one jurisdiction to

Level of Effort and Objective

One or two people can organize project funding, agency assistance, and approval. You will need a larger crew if you wish to make and install the signs yourselves. You may need to plan for maintaining the signs after they are installed. Contacting the agencies and arranging for material and labour may involve two to three days of phone calls, emails, texts and letter writing. It may take up to two or three months to reach the stage of installing signs. The key objective is that road signs remind people that they live in a community / watershed which is criss-crossed with streams. These streams are important to protect if citizens hope to maintain a healthy environment.

Time of Year and Working Conditions

You can build and install signs any time of year, depending on the weather. Be prepared to time your project to fit into the schedule of the Municipal Engineering Department or MOTI. You will probably rely on their resources and assistance.

Safety

Staff from the municipality or MOTI may insist on installing the signs. If your group installs or maintains the signs, make everyone aware of traffic safety. Park safely and wear traffic safety vests. Follow strict safety protocols for everyone's protection.

Procedure

Locate and map suitable sign locations. You may wish to start with the most crucial habitat areas, high traffic routes or areas that seem to suffer from regular abuse. Consider trails, foot bridges, culverts, and bridges.

Decide how many signs you need. Plan to spread the work and expense over a few years if the project involves many signs.

Choose the size, text, colours, and materials for the sign. You may need to consider design guidelines provided for the jurisdiction where you are working. There are developed guidelines for consistent recognition of particular habitats. It is suggested the message be kept simple and graphic:



In many areas, employees of the municipality or MOTI install signs. Decide who will be responsible for maintaining the signs before starting the project.

Strategy No. 2

Brochures, Newsletters and Online

You may wish to produce a brochure and/or a web site about your organization, watershed or stream. Provide information that will interest the people in your community and encourage them to care for their watershed, become active volunteers, change their behaviour or donate to your initiatives. Keep the front page active and attractive with images from recent events, highlight your upcoming volunteer opportunities and initiatives. Your site may contain basic facts about the system and a map of the area, showing streams, roads, trails, and fish and wildlife distribution. Engage your audience through place based information, let them see their home, favourite path or on the map. You may wish to produce your own regular newsletters, semi-annually or quarterly, with up to date information about happenings in the watershed. If you find your once a week update initiative was too optimistic, try releasing a monthly update. Once you have produced any communications piece, be sure to post these on your website and on a social media site. Use the information to write an article for a magazine or other publication. Tweak the communications for the specific use. Each and every communication should contain carefully crafted messaging and information which represents the goals of the group and stays grounded in facts.

Determine your target audience and distribute the information where they are most likely to find it. Select a theme, collect the information, and design your message to capture people's attention. Include

contact information for interested readers, in case they are interested in pursuing greater involvement. Information about the watershed and other resources may be available to assist you complete this task. Consult your Community Advisor.

Project Guidance and Approval

You need no formal approval. Various agencies may share information and experience, and possibly provide financial support, so reach out for their help.

Level of Effort and Objective

It may take as much as ten days to research and prepare the material, get printing estimates, and arrange for distribution. Depending on the medium you are working in someone will need to take the lead, for example; take responsibility to maintain the group's web site. Be mindful of the objective for each communication so that it is crafted to achieve maximum exposure.

Time of Year and Working Conditions

An information package can be prepared any time, but try to distribute it when it likely to get the attention it deserves. Allow plenty of lead time if it contains time sensitive information which may require a response or notifies citizens of a specific event. Putting together on online calendar of your yearly activities will allow people to see the scope of your works, see areas that are of particular interest to their family and plan to attend your events. Add to the calendar the groups meeting dates, project planning, committee meetings, presentations to council, consultative process involvement, this area can easily showcase the groups broad range of involvement.

Safety

If you are delivering brochures in person, respect private property, leave dogs at home, supervise children, and watch for traffic. Communicate respectfully, being careful not to offend individuals or organizations.

Materials and Equipment

- Message, information, maps, contacts
- Camera ready copy prepared to printers' specifications (high quality, royalty free and with permission of use from subjects or photographers)
- Cost will vary considerably depending on quality and number of brochures
- Web site domains are approximately \$100 annually. Be sure that if you contract out the making of your website, that the groups has control over the URL and passwords.

Procedure

Choose the message, intended audience, number of copies, if printing, and the distribution method. Research and collect all the information, and be sure to check everything carefully. Organize your material and have multiple people proof read.

Some basic information to include; a title, objectives and goals of your group and contact information. You may also want to include a watershed map, comments on the current state of the watershed, and a list of affiliated organizations and governments you are working with.

In an effort to present an attractive and credible brochure or newsletter you may wish to consult with a professional desktop publisher. Always get someone else to proofread it. If printing, get multiple quotes from printers. Use recycled paper and plan to print an initial run with a follow up printing once you see where the first run were distributed to and any changes necessary. This will also allow for updating concerns that seem to arrive the day after you print. Limit the use of time sensitive material in the brochure itself, you may want to attach a separate piece to the brochure when delivering that has the upcoming events printed on it. Depending on your projected audience. Distribute the brochures through the mail, door to door, or in a “help yourself” rack at strategic locations.

Collecting, Reporting and Evaluating Information

Keep track of the costs, time involved, resources used, number of copies made, and distribution method. Record all responses to the brochure, newsletter or website. You may want to conduct a survey of the environmental behaviours you hope to influence before you distribute, and again a year later, to evaluate the effectiveness of your campaign. If you have a clear message, you will be able to evaluate its effectiveness more easily. Share this information with the Community Advisor.

Strategy No. 3

Community Meetings

Public hearings, municipal council meetings, and service club meetings provide good opportunities to discuss local watershed issues. You and your group may want to attend, or present a brief at a meeting. You may want to organize a public meeting to raise your own concerns, educate people, and listen to community concerns about local issues. This is an excellent way to find active supporters, choose locally based projects and inform community leaders. Online formats such as ZOOM allow you to bring in guest speakers for your general meeting or for special concerns presentations.

Project Guidance and Approval

You need no formal approval to organize a public meeting. Your Community Advisor has experience dealing with the public and can provide some guidance. You may wish to consult a professional about organizing the meeting if you are tackling an issue that may cause for high spirited conversations.

Level of Effort and Objective

Meetings require preparation and organization. You will develop and research items for the agenda, produce the notice, arrange a location, hold the meeting, follow up to get presentations and notes from speakers and distribute minutes. Plan each step into your scheduling.

It will serve the group well to go into the meetings with specific objectives. Every meeting should be followed up with an assessment of success in meeting stated objectives.

Time of Year and Working Conditions

Schedule your meeting for a weekday evening. Avoid statutory holidays, July and August, and major sporting and cultural events. Select a convenient location which will easily accommodate the expected attendees.

Safety

Community meetings can get quite heated. Watch what you say. You may get quoted! Also, it would be prudent to have a plan in case the meeting does get chaotic. The individual tasked with

Materials and Equipment

- Meeting notice
- Meeting room
- Refreshments
- Stationery
- Audio-visual equipment
- Record keeper
- Chairperson, preferably experienced

Procedure

Discuss the meeting idea with your group and the Community Advisor. Decide on a target audience and write down clear goals and objectives for the meeting. Arrange a meeting place, date, and time. Several references in this module provide suggestions for organizing meetings.

Prepare a notice that includes title, place, time, kind of meeting (general, information, training, problem solving), agenda, and contact person for further information. Distribute notice by mail, email, web sites and social media, and/or community bulletin boards. Arrange for free announcements in the newspaper, on the radio, or on television.

Prepare your meeting place. Organize audio-visual equipment, seating, and refreshments.

Decide whether to make decisions by consensus or majority vote.

Outline the basic ground rules and objectives of the meeting. Keep to the agenda and keep the meeting on time. Assign someone to record action points, deadlines, and relevant information. At the end, summarize action points and plans, inform everyone of any future meetings. Thank all the participants. Clean up the room. Arrange to distribute minutes to all the participants. Confirm details with people who volunteered to take on specific tasks. Follow up on all action points.



A poster for a public meeting. The background is a photograph of a river flowing through a forest. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top, it says 'PUBLIC MEETING @ THE ERRINGTON HALL, ERRINGTON'. Below that, in large white letters, is 'ENGLISHMAN RIVER: An Endangered species'. Underneath that, in white, is 'Wednesday, June - 7:00-9:00pm'. At the bottom, there is a blue banner. On the left of the banner, it says 'Sponsored by:' followed by the logo of the Pacific Streamkeepers Federation and the text 'HiRes Logo'. On the right of the banner, it says 'Join us IN-PERSON or ONLINE' and 'Learn more at www.pskt.ca'.

PUBLIC MEETING @ THE ERRINGTON HALL, ERRINGTON

ENGLISHMAN RIVER:
An Endangered species

Wednesday, June - 7:00-9:00pm

Sponsored by:

 Pacific Streamkeepers Federation
HiRes Logo

Join us **IN-PERSON** or **ONLINE**
Learn more at www.pskt.ca

Collecting, Reporting and Evaluating Information

Send copies of the meeting and minutes to the Community Advisor. Inform potentially affected businesses, government agencies, and citizens of any proposed actions that arise from the meeting. Discuss the success of the meeting among your group and determine the next steps.

Strategy No. 4

Public Displays

You can organize material about your project and present it to the public in a display at a shopping mall, open house, or community festival. If you gathered material to use for a brochure or newsletter it can be used to help create your display. All your messaging and watershed / stream information should be consistent and kept up to date. Keep your display uncluttered, avoid the temptation to share everything that the group has done on one poster. Have an engaging thought or photo that will entice people over to your table where you can talk with them on topics that interest them that tie into what your group has accomplished. Invite them to the next meeting or event.

Project Guidance and Approval

Approach event organizers or shopping mall administrators to secure permission and a suitable location and time to set up your display. Rivers Day, Earth Day community days are all excellent times for your group to share about themselves. Check to see where a festival is happening and ask to set up a table (if you haven't already been invited to do so). Go where there is already a gathering planned or on a popular trail where your audience is already there, put your energy into engaging the public rather than trying to get them to come out to a specific spot.

Level of Effort and Objective

This is an inexpensive and effective way to reach people and find new volunteers. You may need two to four days to collect photos, make posters, and arrange interesting display items. Arrange for a volunteer to stay at the display to provide information. This is an excellent opportunity to have a dialogue with your neighbours about watershed concerns. Make a point of inviting people to come out to volunteer with your group or joining your next meeting to learn more about your effort.

Time of Year and Working Conditions

You can do this project any time of year. Tie it in with one of your other projects or a community event. Shopping malls have more time available at some times of year than others. Research opportunities to place your display at other environmental related events.

Safety

Be careful lifting heavy displays. It may be best to work in pairs.

Materials and Equipment

- Poster material
- Photos
- Display items (equipment, waders, aquarium, etc.)
- Tables, chairs, room dividers or display boards

Procedure

Make arrangements with event organizers or shopping mall administrators well in advance. Prepare an information sheet about the project that includes contact information. Organize materials for your display.

Set up and take down the display at hours convenient to the organizers. Have enthusiastic, well informed members of your group at the display. The display is only a prop to get people talking with your group. Put out a sign-up sheet to collect contact information of people interested in further information, or becoming volunteers.

Collecting, Reporting and Evaluating Information

Discuss the public response to the display with your group members. You may find new volunteers through your efforts.

Strategy No. 5

Communication Tools

In the 21st century there are many different ways to communicate with people. You should choose the medium which is best suited to reaching your target audience. Besides the audience, consider the time frame and the specific purpose of the communication. You will likely find some communication tools are more suitable for immediate or one time exposure while others are best for an ongoing or continuous communication objective.

Immediate / One Time - traditional media, social media



Newspaper, radio and television coverage of your project gets your message to a larger audience and invites public recognition for your volunteers. Your work may educate or inspire others and you may gain new volunteers. The use of social media platforms, such as, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, can be used to get immediate news out to people that the group shares information with regularly. Usually this text, photo or video post is temporal in nature and is used to keep an interested public and group members up to date with short, concise, relevant information.

Reporters from the more traditional news mediums want a good story to interest their audience. Their job is not to provide you with free publicity. You need to interest a reporter in your project. Stress the newsworthy and interesting angles and the

significance of your project to the community. Try to find a human interest angle or surprise element, such as the successful rehabilitation of an area, or the volunteer work of children. Your story should be positive and can tie in with other current issues or events. Provide a written summary or press release about your project to the reporter to avoid being misquoted.

Postings to your social media site should be done considering many of the same protocols as you would for other forms of media, such as, staying positive and not attacking individuals, etc. The posts do not have to be as polished though, because most of your social media followers will be supporters of your project. Sometimes the platforms can generate comments, a dialogue of sorts, which can be both positive and negative. It may be important to ask one member to monitor this discussion and moderate it if necessary, to maintain a respectful relationship with all.

Ongoing / Continuous - web site, podcast, emails

Some communications can be characterized as serving a more ongoing or continuous role with the group's audience. Platforms such as a web site or a regular podcast can be a useful way to communicate with members and supporters. These are mediums which people come to rely on for up to date and interesting information, therefore,

they require regular attention. Another very common tool, emails, is a basic way to keep members who have signed up to receive any pertinent information which is directly addressed to them and provides an option to reply or ask followup questions. These tools require an active individual or team to maintain or develop and refine new material, to keep them fresh and intriguing for your audience. The reward for this extra effort can be a more engaged membership and public. A web site and podcast could also quite possibly reach a larger

Project Guidance and Approval

You need no approval.

Level of Effort and Objective

You may need time, effort and persistence to interest reporters in your story. Build a relationship with local reporters to attain greater access.

Carefully consider the objective of your social media posts. Avoid the temptation to post controversial or unverified information, as this may affect the long term credibility of the group. Remember, anything presented on a web site or in a podcast can be viewed by the world, be mindful of what you say and the power of your words and images.

Time of Year and Working Conditions

You can do this kind of work any time of year.

Safety

No particular safety guidelines apply, except to watch what you say. You can avoid misquotes by providing a written report to the reporter. At times it is best to identify a single individual or small group to be your key communications contact.

Materials and Equipment

Computer with a high speed internet connection

Procedure

Get to know the local environmental reporters and be aware of deadlines and schedules in the media.

Newspapers: Newspapers often have limited staff available. Give lots of advance notice to advertise an event or arrange

coverage of a cleanup or other activity. Remind them a few days before the event. Send a clipping and thank you note after the story is published. If necessary, correct any mistakes politely.

Press releases: A press release is a simple, accurate one page summary of your project. It tells who, what, when, where, why, how. Include project background, importance of the project, and contact people. A press release is useful for many projects, and busy reporters appreciate the concise information. Make sure someone proofreads it first. Hand deliver, fax, or email the press release. Public service announcements: Local media sometimes provide space or time for free public service announcements from registered nonprofit organizations. They may prepare one for you or ask you to supply it. A college communications class or advertising agency may be willing to provide free assistance.

Letters to the editor: This section of a newspaper provides a forum for opinions and information. It requires only a well-written letter.

Social Media: Make good use of your Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts and websites by posting well thought out articles and bright images with action shots of volunteers at “work” include an invitation to your upcoming events.

Interviews: Choose a strong spokesperson from your group who enjoys dealing with the media, is enthusiastic, and is well informed. Be prepared with interesting quotes and a short summary. If you cannot answer a question, be honest about it and offer to get back to the reporter with the information later.

Web Site: If you have a web site it will likely require a webmaster to maintain. Build a team to collect interesting content and funnel this information in a coherent way to the webmaster to present on the site. Work to add new material as often as possible so people will make a habit of checking on your site for news.

Emails: One person can be assigned the role to email members and interested citizens. It provides a way to send direct messages to a very important audience. It can also be especially useful when you are looking to have a dialogue with members. Be cautious of overuse of email and use the BCC function to protect the privacy of your members.

Collecting, Reporting and Evaluating Information

Strategy No. 6

Audio/Video Productions

Project Guidance and Approval

Level of Effort and Objective

Time of Year and Working Conditions

Safety

Materials and Equipment

Procedure

You may wish to survey community attitudes before and after a media campaign. Keep a record of responses from the public and save copies of all newspaper clippings for future reference. Keep a record of all social media posts.

Your group can produce a slide or power point presentation or short video about your project. Offer to show it to schools, clubs, parent councils, municipal committees, or engineering departments. You can also post to your social media sites. Simple facetime live video is a great way to share your enthusiasm for the work you are undertaking in the here and now.

You do not need approval, but you may wish to consult your Community Advisor or other groups for successful ideas.

The project involves some time and effort. You can look at getting advice or assistance from the communications department of a community college or a community television station. The great part about producing a piece of audio visual media in these formats is that it makes it easy to share the core objectives and goals of the group and can be an excellent introduction to the watershed and the many values it holds for citizens.

You can do this project any time of year.

No particular safety guidelines apply.

- Summary sheet
- Script
- Camera
- Video/audio recording equipment
- Cost: minimal

Consider your intended audience. Choose a theme and strong images that relate to your topic. Organize your material and edit it well. Keep your presentation to twenty minutes or less. Most audiences have short attention spans. You may want to provide a short written summary. Leave time for and be prepared to answer questions.

Collecting, Reporting and Evaluating Information

Having set goals, targets and clear objectives will assist you in determining your communications plan and projects. Timelines to achieve steps towards meeting these will help keep your group on task as well as allow for celebrations along the way. Regularly schedule times to reflect on your projects and highlight where you have met a goal. Communicate your successes.

Projects that require funding will also require reports. Share these reports broadly to highlight volunteer requirement and retention, group objectives met, numbers such as trees, planted, garbage removed, signs installed or storm drains marked. Map based (xxxx) draw viewers in as they see how your works were done near a known landmark like their home, school or office. Maps also allow you to easily see where works have been done and where you can build on past efforts.

Listen for responses to your presentation.

