



Annual Report

2023-2024

Healthier Futures
Through

Recreation

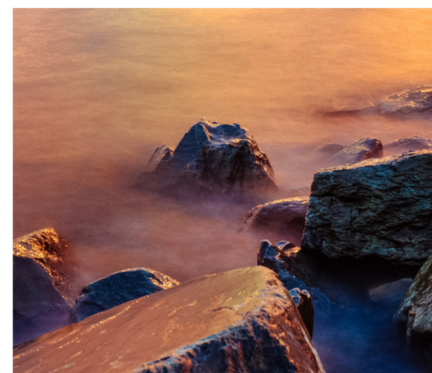
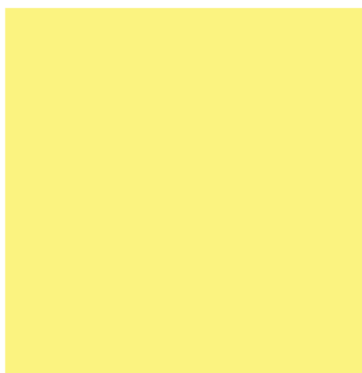
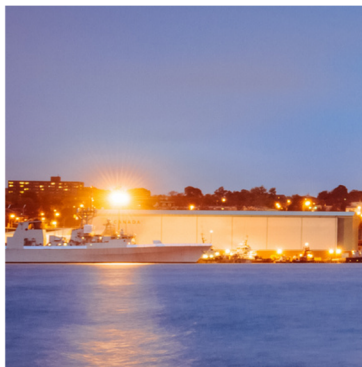


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RECREATION NOVA SCOTIA

INTRODUCTION

Recreation Nova Scotia (RNS) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to building and sustaining active, healthy lifestyles and communities in Nova Scotia. RNS exists to lead, inspire and support Nova Scotians toward healthier futures through recreational experiences. Established in 1998, RNS is a central resource agency for recreation industry members and interested parties. RNS provides leadership, training, and support to help meet national, provincial and local priorities. Through a diverse network of partners and extensive programs and services, RNS actively advocates accessibility and inclusiveness to recreation. RNS has a strong membership, which includes community leaders, practitioners, students, academics, elected officials, and voluntary sector organizations across Nova Scotia who are the direct providers of recreation and related opportunities at the community level.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- 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;
- Promote connectivity between recreation sector professionals, influencers and beneficiaries.

MISSION STATEMENT

Recreation Nova Scotia inspires and supports a diverse and comprehensive network of partners committed to addressing the recreation needs of all Nova Scotians by providing leadership and a strong provincial voice.





MORE ABOUT US

RNS Staff 2023-2024

Marc Seguin, **Executive Director**
 Graham Mounsey, **Program Manager**
 Claire Steele, **Student Intern & Events**
 Jillian Anderson, **Financial Coordinator**
 Alan MacKeigan, **Education Coordinator**
 Heather Beaton, **Recreation Development**
 Robyn Morris, **Digital Media & Communications Manager**
 Fawn Logan-Young, **Equity & Anti-Racism Coordinator**

RNS Board 2023-2024

Rachel Bedingfield, Director of Parks and Recreation, Town of Kentville - **President**
 Gord Tate, Active Living Coordinator for the Municipality of Chester - **Past President**
 Brendon Smithson, Director of Regional Recreation Services for HRM - **President-elect**
 Chris Atwood, Executive Director, CBDC Blue Water - **Vice President of Financing**
 Joel Dawe, Municipality of Truro - **Vice President of Monitoring**
 Clare Steele, Active Communities Coordinator, Pictou County - **Recording Officer**

Directors:

Laura Jacobs, Active Living Coordinator, New Minas
 Gabrielle Riley Gallagher, Senior Analyst for the NS Government
 Christena Curry, Manager of Parks, Recreation, & Youth, Millbrook First Nation
 Ruth-Ellen Jackson, Northwood Volunteer Coordinator & Recreation Lead
 Jack MacLean, Nova Scotia Community College

Ex-officio:

Dept. Of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage (non-voting) Michelle Aucoin, CCTH
 Marc Seguin, Executive Director, Recreation Nova Scotia

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Recreation Nova Scotia Members, Partners and Stakeholders,

As I complete my final year serving on the board of Recreation Nova Scotia as President, I notice that our membership, and the recreation sector at large, has never been more relevant and important for communities across the Province of Nova Scotia. I've come to think of the RNS network as one very large, very resilient family. A family dedicated to serving fellow Nova Scotians, helping to create healthier and more resilient communities. A family that responds to community needs in times of crisis and cheers loudly in celebration 'of each other's successes.

The changes around us—whether social, political, technological, scientific, economic or otherwise—require that Recreation Nova Scotia continue to help our members navigate through new and increasingly complex landscapes, which profoundly impact the organizations for which we work, the communities that we serve, and the recreation profession at large. In many instances, we are responsible for helping to deliver both provincial and local priorities, oftentimes with limited resources. But our terrific RNS community of professionals, including all of our partners and stakeholders, is a network on which I have become increasingly reliant when facing these new challenges and opportunities.

I am so incredibly proud of our organization's successes over the last year, particularly in working to create a more fiscally resilient organization, becoming a nationwide leader in anti-racism in recreation work by introducing innovative programming formats and topics, for providing professional development and outreach opportunities for our members, and for supporting access to recreation through our equipment loan initiative. In the year ahead, we will continue these initiatives and re-focus our membership services, including member engagement and sector advocacy.

Thank you, members, for your continued participation and enthusiasm in our professional community. You are the heart of this work across this province, and we are honoured to serve you. Thank you also to my fellow board members who have served with me these past years; we have been able to make small changes that will have a lasting impact, and we did it all while valuing diverse perspectives, storytelling, and laughter.

Finally, I'd like to give a special shout-out of appreciation to the phenomenal staff working for Recreation Nova Scotia, both past and present. Your work and dedication to RNS this past year have been relentless. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire membership: thank you, thank you, thank you.

Yours in the spirit of recreation,

Rachel Bedingfield

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RACHEL BEDINGFIELD AND GRAHAM MOUNSEY



In the 2023-2024 year, the organization took strides in new areas of work while strengthening existing projects. We distributed close to \$200,000 of funding for Equipment Loan Projects, and it is exciting to see the impact of all those projects across the province.

RNS was happy to receive additional investment for the Anti-Racism Charter Initiative via CCTH and CPRA. This funding allowed us to hire Fawn Logan-Young on a one-year contract as our Equity and Anti-Racism Coordinator. We're continuing to learn and understand more about how the Anti-Racism Charter is being used and, more importantly, how this resource can support organizations in changing their practice or approach, making decisions, or helping with advocacy.

RNS Staff were excited to spend time volunteering with the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) in Kijipuktuk (Halifax) in July, learning and growing at the unique event. We look back fondly at the fantastic conference at Digby Pines in October 2023 and thank the Valley Recreation crew for putting together a tremendous few days of networking, learning and growth. Alongside the Annual Conference, we looked to provide a range of other educational opportunities such as Recreation for Mental Health, Intro to Therapeutic Horticulture, Beyond Barriers for Inclusion, and the launch of the Anti-Racism in Recreation online module via the REC Room platform.

The year also saw more office moves for the organization, as our temporary shared office space with NAIG ended in late 2023. We moved just around the corner, entering into an agreement to share an office lease with Berg, which has provided adequate space and has been an effective operational cost-saving measure for the organization.

Lastly, we want to thank the staff who have gone on to new adventures throughout the 23-24 years. We said farewell to Cassandra Manuel, Claire Steele, and Emma Clarke, who all contributed uniquely and significantly to the organization.

RNS FINANCIAL SUMMARY

FISCAL YEAR APRIL 1, 2023 – MARCH 31, 2024

RNS engaged MNP to independently audit the financials for the year ending March 31, 2024. The auditors provided a clean audit opinion.

The detailed Audited Financial Statements can be [found on our website](#).

	2024	2023
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash	567,168	677,040
Accounts receivable	36,397	93,978
Term deposits	193,643	183,936
Prepaid expenses & deposits	-	6,034
	797,208	960,988
Capital assets	1,159	2,175
	798,367	963,163
LIABILITIES		
Current		
Accounts payable & accruals	79,704	70,336
Deferred contributions	317,374	506,891
	397,078	577,227
Commitments		
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	173,254	157,901
Internally restricted	2,844	2,844
Externally restricted	225,191	225,191
	401,289	385,936
	798,367	963,163



A YEAR IN REVIEW

We kicked off 2023 with the launch of our new website in January, giving it a refreshed look. We also created brand guidelines to create a consistent brand strategy across print and digital platforms that are in use with our partnerships.

We moved around this year, too! We moved from our office in Bedford to our temporary home in Burnside for 2023, which we had the pleasure of sharing with the North American Indigenous Games, to an office we share with Berg just further down the road in early 2024!

And our team grew!

In June 2023, Fawn Logan-Young joined us as the Equity and Anti-Racism Coordinator, focusing on advancing and supporting the work related to the Charter. We also began the search for two new positions: PRO and Membership Coordinator and Inclusion Coordinator.



Anti-Racism



Education



Partnerships



Communication

ANTI-RACISM CHARTER IN RECREATION

Following the launch of the Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation in October 2022, our promotion and communication around the Charter continued throughout this year.

We were grateful to receive funding from the Canadian Parks & Recreation Association’s Reaching Each & Every One program to support increased capacity in this project and allow us to collaborate more with current and prospective Charter signatories.

In addition, we were grateful to receive further funding from CCTH to advance anti-racism work in recreation. This allowed us to hire Fawn Logan-Young as Equity & Anti-Racism Coordinator full-time for the 2023-2024 year.

By promoting the Anti-Racism Charter and supporting its signatories, we created new tools and partnerships to support anti-racism work in the long term. We delivered presentations and facilitated workshops across Nova Scotia and beyond, participating in BCRPA’s Symposium in Vancouver and Recreation New Brunswick’s Conference in Dieppe.

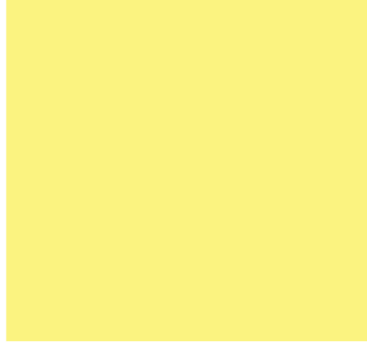


In November 2023, along with CCTH and sport and recreation partner organizations, we participated in the second annual Anti-Racism Week in Sport & Recreation. A website was created to collect and share resources focused on active allyship in sport and recreation.



In March of 2024, we collaborated on three separate projects as part of our Reaching Each & Every One funded initiative:

1. We supported the Town of Oxford and dedicated partners in the region to host an event focused on bringing newcomers and families together in Oxford to share food, dance, games from the diverse cultures within the community. The Connecting Cultures event brought over 50 people together representing over 15 countries for food.



55+
ATTENDEES

2. Together with Electric Wheels Jr Roller Derby, we hosted a free ‘try-it’ day for roller skating and roller derby. In the morning, a specific BIPOC youth session took place. Around 15 youth participated in this session, and the open skate in the afternoon saw 55+ people attend. The collaborative nature of organizing and hosting the event created new community connections for further possibilities in this area of HRM.

3. We were thrilled to meaningfully partner and support Elevate & Explore Black Nova Scotia to work towards hosting a Black Women’s Wellness Retreat focused on creating a culturally safe, intuitive and informed space with an experience centering around recreation as a catalyst for holistic health. The retreat is planned to take place in April 2024, with a total cohort of 15 women signed up to attend.



ANTI-RACISM IN RECREATION ONLINE TRAINING MODULE

In early 2023-2024, we worked to finalize the Anti-Racism in Recreation Online Training module, fine-tuning content and additional resources. We were delighted to launch this online training module at the 2023 RNS Annual Conference on the newly created home of education offerings at RNS, the REC Room.



THE REC ROOM

EDUCATION

THE REC ROOM

In partnership with Momentum IT Group, RNS launched its E-Learning website, “The REC Room,” as voted by 2023 Conference delegates. This platform allows RNS Members to quickly pay and register for on-demand courses, webinars, and events.

The REC Room hosts our Anti-Racism Training Module, which has been offered free to RNS Members and signatories for the past year. Since its launch in October 2023, 160 learners from over 50 organizations have access to the training.

We worked with a local Graphic Designer to give The REC Room its brand in January 2024.

WORKSHOPS

Fit to be Canadian?

In November 2023, Recreation Nova Scotia hosted an educational event for Anti-Racism in Sport and Recreation Week. This event welcomed 40 individuals from 9 different RNS member organizations and 11 non-member organizations to the Atlantica Hotel to hear Dr. Lisa Tink present “Fit to Be Canadian?” A workshop exploring our understanding of exclusion in a recreation context, tracing some of the conditions that have shaped our recreation systems today.



Debbie Eisan from the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre was welcomed to facilitate the “KAIROS Blanket Exercise” as part of the afternoon session. The Blanket Exercise is an interactive educational program that teaches the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. It was created in response to the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and continues to be used as a teaching tool across Canada today.

BrokerLink

We collaborated with our partners from BrokerLink Insurance to offer a series of free Lunch & Learn Webinars. These sessions allowed our network to better understand the value and protection BrokerLink can offer for home, vehicle, and business insurance.

Gender Equity Followup

Nancy Dubois from CPRA hosted a virtual follow-up to their 2023 Gender Equity workshop in March 2024. This workshop allowed 21 participants to build on what they had learned and provided them with tools to start their gender equity journeys within their own organizations.

SIMPLY GOOD FORM: BEYOND BARRIERS FOR INCLUSION

Specialists in IDEA consulting: inclusion, diversity-celebrating, equity and accessibility training; Simply Good Form Inc. empowers companies and service providers with skills to succeed as inclusive industry leaders. RNS partnered with Simply Good Form in September 2023 to bring you the Beyond Barriers 4 Inclusion (BB4I): Leadership in Recreation and Sport certification course. BB4I Leadership in Recreation and Sport helps elevate leadership skills, giving learners the skills and tools to create welcoming, inclusive, and equitable spaces.

The 3-series course was offered at \$99 or \$40/course, with each course earning RNS a 10% commission.

ROOT IN NATURE

RNS partnered with Root in Nature in November 2023 to promote their course, "Intro to Therapeutic Horticulture." Pre-approved by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification for 8 hours of continued education credits, this virtual, self-paced course provides an overview of the principles and practices of horticultural therapy, including the physical, social and psychological benefits of working with plants.

Anyone signing up with the promo code paid RNS a 10% commission.



10%
COMMISSION
MADE



RECREATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH (R4MH)

Following a revamp of training course content, there have been three R4MH Workshops. The most notable was conducted in collaboration with Acadia University’s Community Development Program. This workshop connected first- and second-year students and allowed them to assess how closely Acadia University currently adheres to and promotes the R4MH Guidelines to Welcoming Spaces & Programs.

15,000
ENGLISH
COPIES
1,200
FRENCH
COPIES

OUTDOOR PLAY MATTERS

A partnership between South Shore Active Communities and Recreation Nova Scotia, with funding from the Province of Nova Scotia, led to a new digital and print resource entitled Why Outdoor Play Matters for Children: A Practical Guide for Parents and Caregivers. 15,000 English and 1,200 French copies had been provided to all pre-primary classrooms, Before and After school programs (BAP), and to first-time families at post-natal

discharge from hospitals. Recreation Nova Scotia had served to distribute over 200 copies of the Outdoor Playbook by request to Recreation Facilities, Family, Community & Health Resource Centres, Post-Secondary Institutions, and Non-Profit Organizations across all regions of the province.

A digital version was placed on the RNS website, as well as downloadable chapters.

A French version was added shortly after.



HIGH FIVE IN NOVA SCOTIA

Considering the high demand for PHCD training in the spring/early summer of 2023, RNS has asked High Five National to hold a Nova Scotia-based PHCD Train the Trainer workshop before the end of the year to increase capacity for the spring/summer of 2024.

The 2023-2024 High Five workshop breakdown is as follows:

- 37 Principles of Healthy Child Development (PHCD) Workshops,
 - 504 learners
- 1 PHCD Communicating with Empathy Workshop,
 - 27 learners
- 1 PHCD Conflict Resolution Workshop,
 - 27 Learners
- 4 Principles of Healthy Aging (PHA) Workshops,
 - 54 Learners
- 1 Strengthening Children’s Mental Health (SCMH) Workshop,
 - 29 Learners
- 2 High Five Sport Workshops,
 - 25 Learners
- 1 Quest-2 Workshop,
 - 14 Learners



The best way to play™



Reviewing the number of Principles of Healthy Childhood Development workshops and learners from the 2022-23 report (40 workshops, 604 learners) shows that there has been a consistent demand for quality-standard training for children’s programs across the sector year to year.

While participation in the Principles of Healthy Aging (PHA) workshops had been less than initially anticipated, four workshops have been held across three regions of the province. These workshops have resulted in four trainers gaining fully certified trainer status and the ability to hold PHA workshops in each of their regions of the province.



EVENTS

JUNE IS PARKS AND RECREATION MONTH (JPRM)

June is Parks & Recreation Month (JPRM) in Nova Scotia – a time to recognize and celebrate recreation’s tremendous contributions to our health, well-being and quality of life. JPRM ran from June 1 to June 30, 2023, with the theme “Engage. Play. Get Outside. Explore Your Nova Scotian Playground.” This theme broke down into four weekly themes covering recreation’s social, economic, spiritual, and developmental benefits. Each week, we shared benefits, tips, and events and highlighted top parks and trails around Nova Scotia, all with a brand new look to the campaign.

This year, we partnered with Decathlon Dartmouth for a donated prize of a Riverside 500 bike, helmet, and accessory pack to one winner of the fill-in-the-blanks contest we hosted on Facebook. The contest received a collective of 44 reactions, 14 shares, and 16 participants, with a total of 25 comments. The contest reached 3,708 individuals on Facebook, had almost 300 engagements and drove clicks to our website - a huge outcome for RNS. JPRM posts outperformed all other posts on all platforms.

Due to the circumstances Nova Scotia faced at the time with the wildfires, we also offered a members-only contest from June 8 to June 22, 2023, conducted via email in hopes of lifting members’ spirits through this challenging time. We had the Nova Scotia Off-Road Riders Association win by a name draw after submitting photos of how they enjoy their own backyards. They will be awarded a pizza party for their team at an upcoming meeting.



**3,500+ REACH
ON FACEBOOK**

**300
ENGAGEMENTS**



TAKE THE ROOF OFF WINTER (TTROW)

Take the Roof Off Winter is RNS' annual campaign to get Nova Scotians active during the winter months when research shows individuals are less active due to factors such as the cold and darker days. This initiative aligns with the RNS mission statement—"healthier futures through recreation"—and helps increase brand awareness, build trust, and uphold our reputation and credibility with municipalities, partners, RNS members, and non-members.



This year's theme was "Winter Maintenance: Maintaining the mind, body, and soul." Running for eight weeks, we partnered once again with Make Your Move, several Recreation Departments in municipalities (New Glasgow, Yarmouth, Colchester, Kentville, and Pictou), Hike NS, Digby Recreation, and Ecology Action Centre to expand our reach, which was over 1000 individuals within 24 hours of launching.

Based on the unpredictable winter we had the previous year that led to poor contest engagement, we hosted a simplified contest for prizes (donated by Make Your Move) that allowed anyone to participate, no matter the weather. We asked people to take the TTROW Touque with them and post a photo in the comments of our pinned post. We provided a digital copy of the touque for individuals to download or print. We had good engagement throughout and, by a random name draw, had eight winners, with participants split 50/50 between members and non-members.

We also shared tidbits, resources, and events and took the toque on adventures voted on by the audience. We engaged with our audience, and whenever possible, we drove clicks to our website. To get partnership buy-in, we also created a TTROW Brand Asset Kit that included a logo and graphics for them to easily use.

The campaign also brought us many new likes on our social media and made the TTROW page one of the top-performing pages on our website during the eight weeks.

CONFERENCES

RNS Annual Conference



This year’s conference celebrated the 25th anniversary of RNS. It was hosted in partnership with Valley Recreation and took place at Digby Pines in October 2023. The theme was “Remember. Recognize. Re-Ignite” to offer delegates the chance to remember where we have come from, recognize what we have accomplished, and reignite our passion as we move forward as a sector.

We had a full house for the pre-conference session with Dr. Jackie Oncescu, with 50+ delegates and just about 200 attendees for the entire conference.

Conference funding was made available to individuals and Provincial Recreation Organizations to help offset the costs of attending. Up to \$15,000.00 was made available to individuals from equity-deserving groups, and another \$5,000.00 was made available to Provincial Recreation Organizations (PROs).



ARFC

Planning for ARFC was underway with our Atlantic partner organizations for May 29-31, 2024, in Fredericton, New Brunswick. with the them of “Adapt and Elevate”

NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS GAMES (NAIG)

In July 2023, the RNS team had a great week offering our support to the North American Indigenous Games—a small part of the over 3,000 volunteers who made the week special for all the athletes, coaches, and families.

NAIG was held across Halifax, Dartmouth, and Millbrook First Nation, and brought over 756 Indigenous Nations from across Turtle Island together to celebrate, share, and reconnect through sport and culture.

HONOURING DR. BRENDA ROBERTSON

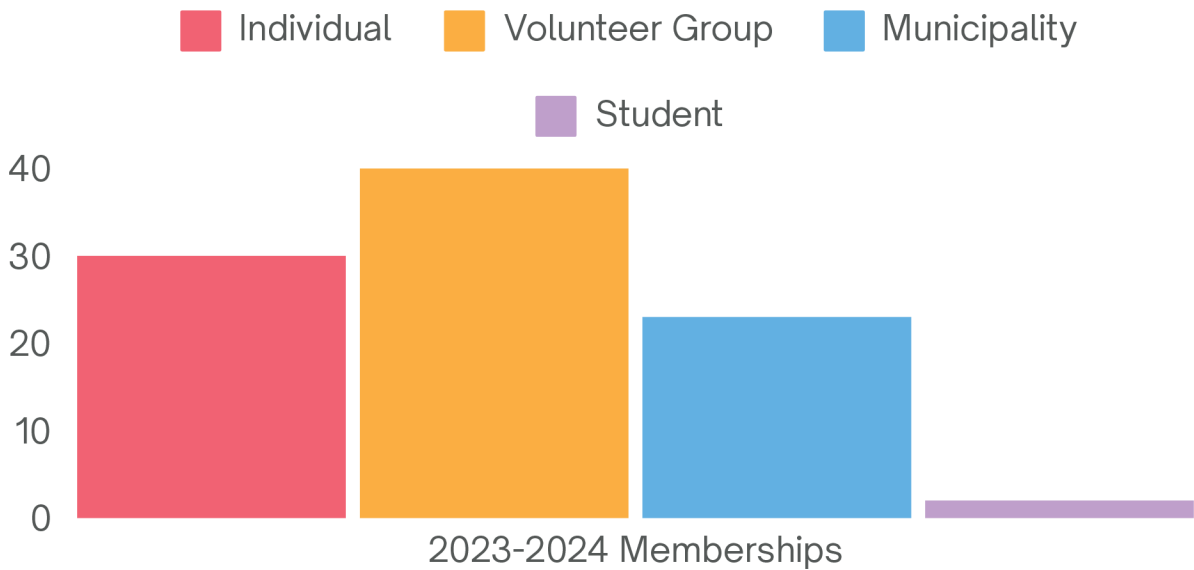
In late Spring 2023, a plaque was created and presented at a tree dedication event in Wolfville celebrating Dr. Brenda Robertson in honour of her receiving the RNS Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019, RNS’ highest award. The event was attended by a close group of friends and colleagues who were also invited to say a few words.

MEMBERSHIP

MEMBER BENEFITS

A new partnership with the Halifax Wanderers offered RNS members a 15% savings on Halifax Wanderers tickets to select home matches throughout 2024! Home Matches are at the Wanderers Grounds in Halifax, and the promo code expires after the last home game on October 19, 2024

MEMBER OVERVIEW



Healthier Futures Through Recreation

95 MEMBERS



COMMUNICATIONS

HIGHLIGHTS

Communication tactics remain successful in the 2023-2024 year. We continue to send monthly newsletters and e-bulletins as needed and post frequently on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. At the same time, Twitter took a backseat due to low engagement and activity and a change in the platform that increased bots (spam). We update our website often and use it as a link to drive people to it.

Newsletters/Emails

Newsletters and e-bulletins for the 2023-2024 year have a 54% average open rate (an increase from last year) and a low bounce rate, meaning people are receiving, opening and reading them. We implemented an option for individuals to sign up for our newsletters and emails on social media and on our website which drew in many new contacts apart from our new member contacts. We also had 34 individuals unsubscribe from our newsletter - a decrease from last year.

Social Media

We post frequently across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn recognizing the different audiences on each platform. Twitter is seldom used as our audience is not the most engaged or active on this platform and due to platform changes, has increased in bots (spam). However, we recognize that some professional groups and members are still active here and will post important information when needed.



**54%
OPEN EMAILS**



**212
NEW
CONTACTS**

760 NEW FOLLOWERS

330,000+ REACHED ON SOCIAL

3.30% ENGAGEMENT RATE

15,000+ POSTS

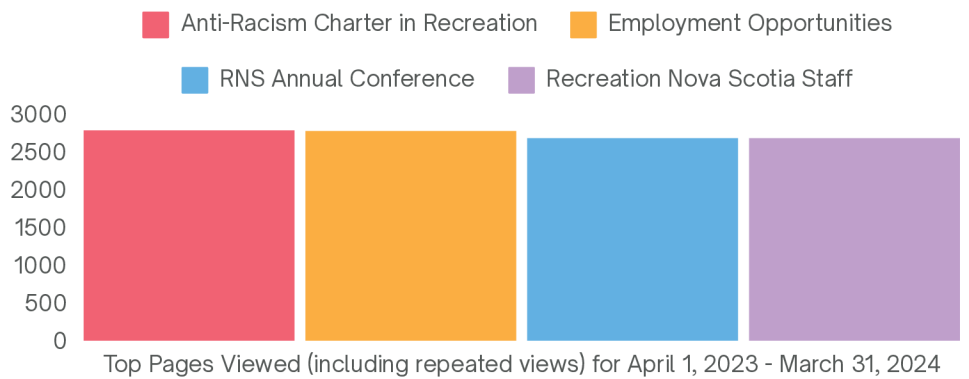




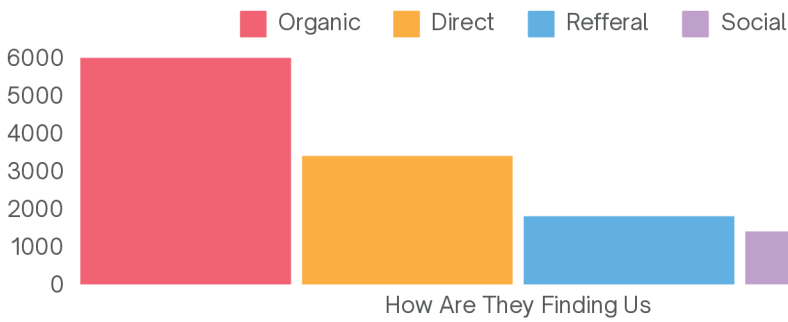
**13,000
NEW USERS**

**2,300
RETURNED**

Website Analytics



Healthier Futures Through Recreation



- 1. GOOGLE**
- 2. BING**
- 3. FACEBOOK**

**1.28 MIN
AVG.
ENGAGEMENT
PER ACTIVE
USER**

FUNDING

Recreation Nova Scotia would like to thank the Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism, and Heritage (CCTH) and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) for your continued support and commitment to our organization's mission and the recreation sector.

THANK YOU!



Equipment Loan



Green Jobs



Youth
Employment



Reaching Each and
Every One

EQUIPMENT LOAN

The 36 RNS Equipment Loan Grant Program recipients were announced in Spring 2023. The program had 60 applicants with a \$300,000 provincial ask, showing the need for such programs.

Funds from the program will go to advancing recipients' equipment loan project needs, fostering a more inclusive and accessible province for all!



\$490,000+
24 PROJECTS

CANADIAN PARKS AND RECREATION ASSOCIATION

Reaching Each and Everyone

RNS supported Canadian Parks & Recreation with administration of this national grant program from Sport Canada. Funding was available to support equity-seeking groups in accessing recreational sport opportunities, with grants of up to \$50,000 available to eligible organizations. In Nova Scotia, funding totalling \$495,813 was distributed to 24 projects across the province.

Youth Employment

RNS continued its relationship with CPRA and facilitated the Youth Employment Experience program.

There were 13 successful YEE employment initiatives in Nova Scotia, with funding totalling \$147,000 in the province to support youth employment in recreation in all six regions.

Green jobs

GREEN JOBS IN NOVA SCOTIA

10 YOUTH WERE EMPLOYED

The CPRA Green Jobs Initiative provides direct financial support (via wage subsidies of up to 50%) to local governments and community organizations to support jobs that focus on employing youth for park, conservation or nature projects.

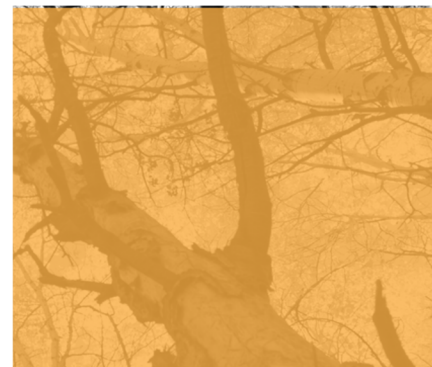
3702 HOURS WORKED

\$30,999 INVESTED



Celebrating 25 years

Healthier Futures
Through Recreation



→ FB: @RecreationNovaScotia
LI: @RecreationNovaScotia
IN: @recreationns

