

BCRPA Talk on Seniors

Today's session is about sharing ideas and I am here to start the discussion but this is also about you sharing your projects and funding sources.

I will talk about the two positions I have recently had and some of the exciting projects that we have facilitated.

Recreation Coordinator for the Canoe Creek Indian Band and Recreation Coordinator for the City of Williams Lake.

My job for the Canoe Creek Band was to educate and provide activities for the community members to be more active and to eat better

I was also responsible for finding my own funding every year

When I first started I lead classes like we would in a non-native community – I was soon to learn that physical activity to First Nation people was different than for non natives.

One of the groups that I worked with where the Elders

The first activity was to do a Chair Exercise Class twice a week and to provide a healthy snack afterwards.

So I would pick them up and then take them home afterwards.

One of the Elder talked about how much better he felt on days when there were exercises.

We then moved into a walking program for the Elders and on bad weather days we walked in the gym.

One of the really cool projects that we did was our Elders

With funding from New Horizons we were able to pay our Elders to teach the younger people on the reserve their traditional practices that are now being lost.

the first was a net making project where one of the Elders was paid to lead adults and teenagers how to tie the knots for a traditional net.

The second session was for the Elders to show the younger people where to find their traditional medicine. A bus took the community members on five different trips to various locations to find and show how to prepare traditional medicine.

The third was canning fish – we did four different workshops with community members and students in the schools mentoring Elders canning fish skills.

The last was the hunting workshop where Elders showed their skills in shooting, skinning and cooking deer. If you ever think that hunting isn't good exercise you need to spend time with the Elders that walk for 5 – 6 hours each day looking for game.

I am presently working with the City of Williams Lake as a Recreation Coordinator.

Last year we applied for funding under Union of BC Municipalities, Senior Housing and Support Initiative for a program called "Senior Sampler

"Senior Sampler" was a nine month project beginning in March and ending in November.

This program allowed Senior's to sample different kinds for exercises for free. The programs were non-threatening and only seniors attending allowing them to feel completely comfortable.

Seniors were surveyed to find out what they wanted

The project kicked off with Senior's Trail Walking, a program with seniors walked the trails surrounding Williams Lake. There were forty seniors that registered for this program; people from the very fit to the inactive.

The next free program was a fall prevention class where seniors were divided into two divisions; groups of people with mobility issues and people without mobility issues. The response for this program was so overwhelming that two extra classes of classes for people without mobility issues was added.

The third free program was a month of free aquafit classes for seniors. Participants could choose between Monday and/or Friday to come to these classes. There were huge amounts of seniors attending these classes

August was the free swimming lessons for seniors. Class sizes were limited to allow quality instruction. The two levels of lessons were beginners and those able to swim.

The weight training part of the project was organized over three months to allow as many seniors as possible a free weight room orientation. There were 72 seniors that attended these sessions.

Yoga was the activity for the month of October with twelve seniors learning the benefits of flexibility and strength.

The last month was divided into three different dance themes; Salsa with an African warm-up, square dancing and belly dancing.

This project has been an amazing opportunity to help senior overcome some of their barriers to physical activities.

Many seniors tried different activities for the first time and found that they really enjoyed them.

One of our seniors has lost over 100 pounds since the beginning of the project. Another senior fighting depression and arthritis found aquafit was a great addition to her life. The visiting and socialization that the activities provided the senior was another great outcome of the initiative.

The aquafit, weight training and yoga are the three that were the most successful.

We found that people should have paid for the courses as some of them feel that these courses should be free now.

Our aquafit classes are now busier than they have ever been

The amount of seniors using our weight room has increased by about 30 percent over the year before

One of the programs that we are doing now is our Yoga at the Senior Village – they let us use the space for free – we have paid participants coming for our program and the village brings down some of their residents – it is a great win/win situation.