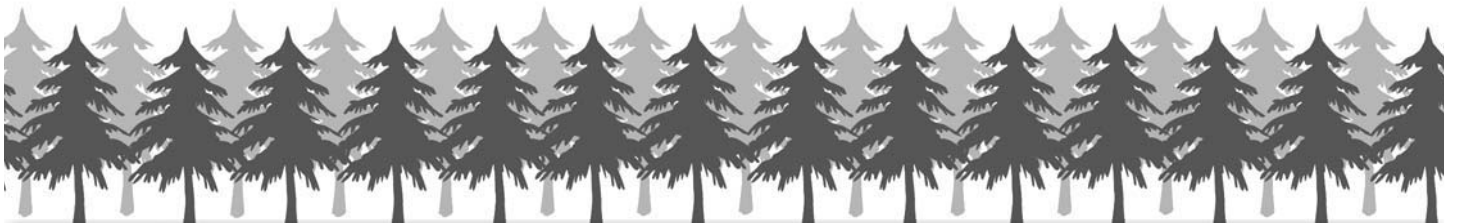

11. Promotion



Introduction

Promotion is a specialized form of communication focused on getting the word out about something or promoting certain events, concepts or ideals. Most northern sport, culture or recreation activities have a promotion plan or a way to let everyone know what is going on. Some people call this advertising or marketing, and there is often a budget for costs such as posters, radio/TV ads, or brochures.

Promoting what we do also includes “tooting our own horns” or telling people what we have accomplished and why they should be interested in, involved with or supportive of the things we do. Success stories not only build the self-esteem of those directly involved, but also help whole communities to feel better about themselves. It is not bragging in a bad way to promote the good things that are happening as a result of your programs, services or activities.

Promotion is often seen as the tools and processes used to get people to do something – like come to the game, join a team, donate money for a cause or support local programs. Brochures, posters, websites and newsletter are common tools used for this purpose. We can promote ideas, events, candidates and a wide range of activities all connected to our desire to get people involved or to have them participate in something. Political messaging is also a consideration and is most often linked to the promotion of our work or to advocacy for our funding, causes and concerns. Whenever we seek support, we are promoting ourselves, our work or our communities, so it is important to do it well.

Community Engagement through Promotion

Certain types of promotion are designed to influence how we think, what we value and how we behave. Other types of promotion help generate interest and get people involved. The getting people involved type of promotion is often called promotion for community engagement. It operates on a basic set of assumptions: to get people involved in something they need to be aware of it, be interested in it and then motivated to do something. This type of engagement promotion has to appeal to their values, beliefs, curiosity or interests.

Sport, culture and recreation have some key messages that form the philosophy of the programs and services provided. They are a type of social messaging through promotion. Some of these messages are the promotion of healthy living, active lifestyles, pride in our culture and community spirit. Other messages are about coming out to an event or taking part in a program – get involved – volunteer – take part in any way you can.

Promoting ideas to get people involved is all about establishing the message, the messenger, and the frequency of messages. It should be fun, but also well thought out because our promotion can reach a very wide audience very quickly and is the “calling card” of the organization. Particularly true if you are not from the north.

Media and Political Relations

The media helps broadcast the news and is a useful vehicle to promote, advertise or get stories told. Having a good working relationship with local media such as radio, TV and newspapers can be very helpful when trying to share general information, promote an event, or focus some attention on a concern or a job well done. Most people working in the public media are well trained and happy to offer tips and advice on how to provide them with information they need in order to serve your community/organization.

Political and other influential relationships require a special type of communication and strategic thought about what it is you want them to know, what you want them to do, and how and when you would like them to do it. Most politicians are elected and rely on votes to keep them in their positions. Therefore, it is to everyone's advantage to create awareness and interest in what is happening through sport, culture and recreation and to invite politicians to be partners (or at least friends) with what you are doing. It is better to build a relationship over time than to try to connect suddenly when there is a need or issue. This is particularly true when the elected officials or decision makers are in the south rather than in the northern community.



The Northern Context

One of the best ways to promote things in the north is through word of mouth. Word travels quickly (for better or worse) about what's going on and what people think of it. Northern radio is often the very best way as everyone (of a certain age) listens to it. Because our communities are small and everyone goes to the store or post office or the band office, it is easy to get the word out by putting up posters or through newsletters or brochures.

We all like to hear positive news, so in the north it a good idea to promote success stories and accomplishments so that others can see what is going on, who is doing what and to know why it is a good idea to get involved. Our issue is getting this information to people in the south who need to know more about the north.

"We use radio all the time to advertise our announcements and programs – the best time slot is just before Bingo!" – Northern Bingo Player

What's Important to Know?

- ★ Building relationships with the media and political leaders is an important part of promotion and maintaining these relationships takes time and effort.
- ★ The more you promote what you are doing the better – but learn to do it well.
- ★ Coordinating your promotional efforts reduces the amount of mixed messages or confusion particularly if what you do is similar to another group.
- ★ Training is a good idea if you are working with community relations or promotion.
- ★ Increased community involvement is often a result of good promotion.
- ★ Keep your promotional materials simple so that everyone can understand them.
- ★ Community knowledge is the key to finding the best ways to get the word out.

Tips and Advice

1. Know your audience and find the best way to reach them.
2. Make sure that promotion materials are professional and relevant.
3. Where possible use public service announcements to keep costs down.
4. Keep messages positive to build local confidence and pride.
5. When in doubt, ask for help.
6. The media and politicians both like to know what's going on – so tell them.
7. Promote your community (and its events) every chance you get.



Story

At Charlebois Community School in Cumberland House, students find out what is happening for evening and weekend programs by checking out their facebook page under “Charlebois Recreation Coordinator”. It has daily updates of activities and there were fifty friends signed up within days of setting up the new site. This is a good example of using technology that the youth are using to communicate.

“I feel that by hosting (and volunteering for) cultural and sporting events in the far north, many people receive a first hand view of the true northern culture.” – Accommodations Committee, Northern Saskatchewan Games and Cultural Festival, Black Lake

“I put posters up all over the community and they were all taken down. So I put them back up again – and not only did we get good representation but I ended up having to take my posters down after the program.” – Blair Eyahpaise, Community & School Recreation Coordinator, Hall Lake

Toolbox Connection

In the toolbox you will find the following tools related to this section:

- Marketing and Promotion
- Benefits and Marketing Messages
- Creative Promotion and Marketing Ideas
- Sample Poster (to be added at time of printing)
- Sample Registration/Waiver Form
- Sample Media Release