

Lesson 5

My Community



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the features of municipalities and regional districts?**
- 2 How has the physical environment shaped my community?**
- 3 What actions can be taken to improve my community and why?**

OVERVIEW

Municipalities and regional districts provide essential local services and are responsible for the planning, growth and well-being of their community through the adoption of by-laws and policies.

In this lesson, students review the composition and function of local governments in British Columbia, and gather information about their own municipality or regional district. Through a self-directed project, students work independently or collaboratively with a partner to create an action plan to improve their community. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on the different proposals developed by their classmates and the importance of being an active member in the community.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

We are learning to:

- explain the structure and function of local government in British Columbia;
- analyze how the physical environment has shaped life and work in our community;
- identify ways to improve our community and analyze the possible outcomes of specific actions;
- evaluate different community proposals and why it is important to be an active member of the community.

Tips for Teachers

- Please use or adapt the activities in a way that is appropriate for your class.

Supplies/Needs

- Slide Deck 5
- Access or copies of 5.1 and 5.2.
- Any videos, slide decks, handouts and activity sheets in Word and Google Doc can be found on the project website

Starter

Using a Think-Ink-Pair-Share protocol, invite students to consider three things they like about their community.

Questions to prompt discussion:

- What makes it special? What makes it different from other places?
- What makes it a good place to live?
- Why do people come to live here or visit?

Give students four minutes to brainstorm and jot down a response, four minutes to share with a partner and then have each pair share with the rest of the class.

Activities

1. Use Slide Deck 5 to review the structure and function of local governments in British Columbia.
2. Ask students to investigate their own municipality using the official website and other sources. If you live in an unincorporated area, explore your regional district's website. In pairs, have students fill out Activity 5.1 (or 5.2 for Regional Districts).
 - What is the name of our municipality and/or regional district?
 - What are some interesting facts?
 - What are some landforms and waterways in our community?
 - How does the physical environment affect where people live and how they live? How does it influence jobs and businesses?
 - What are some recent announcements by our municipality or regional district?

3. Through a whole class discussion, pose one or more of the following questions to your students.
 - Can you identify any problems or challenges in our community?
 - Do you see any opportunities for improvement?
 - What actions could be taken to make a positive change in our community?
 - How can we share/protect the natural resources in our community? How can we create a more sustainable community?
4. Using Activity 5.3, ask students to create an action plan to make a positive change or improve sustainability in their community. This can be completed independently, in pairs or small groups. Guiding questions:
 - What is the issue you would like to focus on?
 - What are the underlying factors or causes related to the issue?
 - What actions would you suggest and why?
 - How could the municipality or regional district help? How could community members play a role?
 - Which members from the community would benefit from the plan and how?
 - Could some members of the community be impacted negatively? If so, how?
5. Have students present their action plan through any format they choose – it could be an op-ed article, poster, video, slide deck or diorama.

Consolidation

Have students reflect on the proposals put by their peers. Either have a class discussion or ask students to write a response to the following prompts.

- I liked _____'s idea. It helped me realize...
- It is important to be an active community member because...
- One way I can be an active community member is...

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

| LESSON SECTION | GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS |
|----------------------|---|
| Starter | <p>Can students explain what they like about their community?</p> <p>Can students think critically about what makes their community unique?</p> |
| Activities | <p>Are students asking questions about their municipality or regional district?</p> <p>Can students analyze how the physical environment in their community influences jobs and way of life?</p> <p>Can students make connections between their community and their own lives?</p> <p>Can students identify any challenges or opportunities for change in their community?</p> <p>Can they analyze different actions that can be taken to make a positive change in their community?</p> <p>Can students assess who would be impacted by these changes and how?</p> |
| Consolidation | <p>Can students evaluate the proposals provided by their classmates and provide reasoning?</p> <p>Can students understand why it is important for community members to take an active role in their community and/or how they can?</p> |

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

| | |
|---|---|
| Individual Education Plans | <p>Modifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written work can be presented orally. • Guide students and provide extra time when working with primary and secondary resources. • Use ability grouping to support students. <p>Enrichment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge students by asking them to take on a more detailed action plan project, such as a diorama or extensive slide presentation. • Students could also explore the demographics of the community to draw deeper conclusions about industry and daily life, and compare it to another municipality in the province. |
| Language Learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students to explore home communities as well as the community in which they now live. |
| Culturally Responsive Pedagogy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the community, students could choose to focus on a particular ethnic or religious group and see how they fit into the larger community. • Focus local government research on programs and services for children and youth in the community. • If applicable, encourage students to explore nearby First Nations communities, and their changes over time, or how these communities fit into the larger community. • Analyze how First Nations perspectives on land use have influenced the idea of sustainability. |
| Accessibility & Accommodations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If working in pairs or small groups is not possible, considering using Google Docs for collaborative discussion/brainstorming. • The artwork/media for the action plan can be created and shared in a digital format. |

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

Municipalities and **regional districts** provide British Columbians with essential local services, such as clean water, sewage systems, parks and recreation, and fire protection. These local governments are responsible for the planning, growth and well-being of their community through legislation, by-laws and policies.

There are 162 **municipalities** in British Columbia, covering approximately 89 per cent of the province's population. Municipalities range in population size, from small villages of 100 people to large cities with more than 600,000 people. Based on population and geographic area, there are four classes of municipalities: **villages, towns, districts** and **cities**.

The purposes of a municipality include:

- Providing for good government of its community;
- Providing for services, laws and other matters for community benefit;
- Providing for stewardship of the public assets of its community; and
- Fostering the economic, social and environmental well-being of its community.

Municipalities have the authority to establish a wide range of services under the Community Charter and other provincial legislation. Most of the time whether or not to provide a particular service is the municipal council's choice.

Property taxes are established by each municipality and may vary, based on the type of property owned. Each year, municipalities determine how much money they need to collect from property taxes to contribute to the cost of services, and determine the tax rate based on that amount.

The local government system in British Columbia is unique in Canada. In addition to municipalities, it is composed of 27 **regional districts**, covering almost the entire province. Regional districts range in population from under 4,000 to over two million people.

Regional districts were created to support cooperation and equitable cost-sharing between municipal areas and rural areas. Regional districts are modeled as a federation composed of municipalities, unincorporated areas (electoral areas), and in some cases, Treaty First Nations, each of which have representation on the regional district board.

Like municipalities, regional districts have a similar purpose and the broad authority to operate any service that the board of directors considers necessary or desirable for all or part of the regional district. Some of the more common services provided by regional districts include: water supply, sewers, fire protection, parks and recreation, solid waste management, economic development, animal control, public housing, libraries, emergency services and airports.

Municipal councils are the democratically elected bodies to make decisions on behalf of the municipality, and are accountable for those decisions to their community. They are comprised of a head of council called a **mayor** and several **councillors**, collectively called **council members**.

Council size varies from 5 to 11 members depending on the population. A municipal council makes decisions collectively, meaning that it is not individual council members but rather the council as a whole, based on a majority vote, that decides and acts for the municipality.

Municipal councils appoint one or more members of their elected councils to sit as representatives on their respective regional board (**regional district directors**). In unincorporated areas, **electoral area directors** are elected directly by the people. The representatives of Treaty First Nations are selected from their own governing body, also called regional district directors.

The head of a regional district board of directors is called the **chair**. The chair is chosen by a vote of the members of the regional district board of directors. Collectively, the regional district board is the governing body of the regional district. It has authority to make decisions through resolutions and by-laws, consistent with the purposes of the regional district.

REGIONAL DISTRICTS

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alberni-Clayoquot • Bulkley-Nechako • Capital • Cariboo • Central Coast • Central Kootenay • Central Okanagan • Columbia Shuswap • Comox Valley | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cowichan Valley • East Kootenay • Fraser Valley • Fraser-Fort George • Kitimat-Stikine • Kootenay Boundary • Metro Vancouver • Mount Waddington • Nanaimo | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Coast • North Okanagan • Okanagan-Similkameen • Peace River • qathet Regional District • Squamish-Lillooet • Strathcona • Sunshine Coast • Thompson-Nicola |
|---|---|--|

MUNICIPALITIES

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abbotsford • Armstrong • Burnaby • Campbell River • Castlegar • Chilliwack • Colwood • Coquitlam • Courtenay • Cranbrook • Dawson Creek • Delta • Duncan • Enderby • Fernie • Fort St. John • Grand Forks • Greenwood • Kamloops • Kelowna • Kimberley • Langford • Langley • Maple Ridge • Merritt • Mission • Nanaimo • Nelson • New Westminster • North Vancouver • Parksville • Penticton • Pitt Meadows • Port Alberni • Port Coquitlam • Port Moody • Powell River • Prince George • Prince Rupert • Quesnel • Revelstoke | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richmond • Rossland • Salmon Arm • Surrey • Terrace • Trail • Vancouver • Vernon • Victoria • White Rock • Williams Lake • 100 Mile House • Barriere • Central Saanich • Chetwynd • Clearwater • Coldstream • Elkford • Fort St. James • Highlands • Hope • Houston • Hudson's Hope • Invermere • Kent • Kitimat • Lake Country • Lantzville • Lillooet • Logan Lake • Mackenzie • Metchosin • New Hazelton • North Cowichan • North Saanich • North Vancouver • Oak Bay • Peachland • Port Edward • Port Hardy • Saanich | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sechelt • Sechelt Indian Government • District • Sicamous • Sooke • Sparwood • Squamish • Stewart • Summerland • Taylor • Tofino • Tumbler Ridge • Ucluelet • Vanderhoof • Wells • West Kelowna • West Vancouver • Bowen Island • Sun Peaks • Northern Rockies • Whistler • Comox • Creston • Gibsons • Golden • Ladysmith • Lake Cowichan • Oliver • Osoyoos • Port McNeill • Princeton • Qualicum Beach • Sidney • Smithers • View Royal • Esquimalt • Langley • Spallumcheen • Lumby • Alert Bay • Anmore | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashcroft • Belcarra • Burns Lake • Cache Creek • Canal Flats • Chase • Clinton • Cumberland • Fraser Lake • Fruitvale • Gold River • Granisle • Harrison Hot Springs • Hazelton • Kaslo • Keremeos • Lions Bay • Lytton • Masset • McBride • Midway • Montrose • Nakusp • New Denver • Pemberton • Port Alice • Port Clements • Pouce Coupe • Queen Charlotte • Radium Hot Springs • Salmo • Sayward • Silverton • Slocan • Tahsis • Telkwa • Valemount • Warfield • Zeballos |
|---|---|--|---|