Lesson 5
Municipalities and Regional Districts

GUIDING QUESTIONS

❶ How do local governments influence their communities?

❷ What actions can be taken to improve my community?

❸ Why should I care about my community?

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 begin with an evaluation of their community and exchange of perspectives. After learning about local governments in British Columbia, students complete an online scavenger hunt to learn about their municipality or regional district. Next, students work in groups to develop a detailed action plan to improve an issue in their community or analyze a recent by-law. In the Consolidation activity, students reflect on why they should care about their community and work with others to create positive change.

LEARNING INTENTIONS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- evaluate their community's strengths and weaknesses;
- understand the structure and function of local governments in British Columbia;
- identify key information about their own municipality or regional district;
- analyze different actions that could be taken to address an issue in their community; and,
- evaluate the importance of being an active and engaged community member.

Starter

1. Ask students to evaluate their community by responding to the statements on Activity 5.1. Alternatively, the data could be collected through an online survey. A template in Google Form and MS Forms has been provided on the project website.

   > **TEACHER NOTE**
   > Consider having both students and their families fill out the online survey in order to analyze findings from the wider community.

2. Divide students into small groups and have them discuss their community's strengths and weaknesses and the reasons behind their choices.

3. Analyze the community evaluation scores as a whole class. Questions to prompt discussion:

   - What was the overall evaluation of our community?
   - Was there consensus about our community's main strengths and weaknesses? Why or why not?
   - How did your discussion with classmates influence your views about the community? (Sample prompt: "I liked hearing _____'s perspective about why _____. It was something that I didn't know about or haven't considered before.)

Activities

1. Use Slide Deck 5 to review basic information about local governments in British Columbia.

   Key questions:

   - What are the features and responsibilities of municipalities and regional districts?
   - How do municipal councils and regional district boards function?
   - How do municipalities and regional districts influence their communities?

2. Ask students to complete an online scavenger hunt about their municipality or regional district (Activity 5.2). Give students time to complete it independently or in pairs and then share their responses in small groups, allowing students to add to or update their own activity sheet.

   - Year of incorporation
   - Population and census data (Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2021)
   - Geographic boundaries and two major landforms or waterways within it

- Composition of the municipal council or regional district board (numbers of positions and titles)
- Description of four services provided to the community
- Summary of three recent announcements or new programs offered and who is impacted in the community
- Additional: Photo evidence of neighbourhood attractions, cultural institutions and activities (four pieces)

3. Divide students into pairs or small groups and have them discuss their views about the most important needs and opportunities in their community. Students should reflect on the findings in the *Starter* activity and from their research about their municipality or regional district.

   Questions to prompt student thinking:

   - What do you think are the most pressing needs in our community?
   - Do you see any opportunities for improvement or innovation?
   - How could the health of our community be improved?

4. Ask each group to reach a consensus about one issue they want to address through a detailed community action plan. Using Activity 5.3 as a guide, each group should conduct research, design their plan and analyze the possible outcomes. Students should use primary and secondary resources, such as the local government's website, research studies and media sources.

5. Allow each group to present its plan to the rest of the class.

Consolidation

Through a closing class discussion, have students respond to one or more of the following questions:

- Why should we care about our community?
- Why is it important to collaborate with others on addressing community needs?
- Why is it important to have diversity in government and within groups tackling change in our communities?

Alternative Activity

1. By-laws are the primary legislative instrument of local governments. Municipal councils and regional district boards make decisions by adopting or amending recommendations from its committees and local government officials contained in reports and communications. Ask students to research a recent by-law passed by their municipal council and complete Activity 5.4. Exemplar 5.5 can be used as a guide.

Key questions:

*   **Details:** What are the details of the by-law?
*   **Conditions:** What are the underlying conditions?
*   **Objectives:** What are the goals and objectives?
*   **Results:** How can progress be evaluated?
*   **Analysis:** Do you think the by-law will be effective? Why or why not?

2. In small groups or through a whole class discussion, have students share their by-law research and analysis.

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Language Learners	• Provide students with terms and definitions in advance. • Allow students to explore home communities as well as the community in which they now live.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	• Students may have different feelings towards their community. Encourage empathy and foster a safe place for respectful discussion. • 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 research on programs and services for youth or relevant other groups 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.
Accommodations	• If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs for collaborative activities and discussion. • The community action plan presentation can be created and shared in an entirely digital format, using PowerPoint or Google Slides.

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

- Alberni-Clayoquot
- Bulkley-Nechako
- Capital
- Cariboo
- Central Coast
- Central Kootenay
- Central Okanagan
- Columbia Shuswap
- Comox Valley
- Cowichan Valley
- East Kootenay
- Fraser Valley
- Fraser-Fort George
- Kitimat-Stikine
- Kootenay Boundary
- Metro Vancouver
- Mount Waddington
- Nanaimo
- North Coast
- North Okanagan
- Okanagan-Similkameen
- Peace River
- qathet Regional District
- Squamish-Lillooet
- Strathcona
- Sunshine Coast
- Thompson-Nicola

MUNICIPALITIES

- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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