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Book review / Compte rendu

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Book Review / Compte rendu

Leisure and Recreation in Canadian Society—An Introduction. George Karlis. Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Publishing, 2004. ISBN 1-55077-138-8. \$59.95.

Canada is an industrial society in which its citizens enjoy a high quality of life and an increasing amount of free time. It is within the mass consumption of goods and services that leisure and recreation play a role in the construction of identity in Canadian society. We all need to pursue a positive and deeply felt experience in leisure and recreation. In fact, these are the values shared by most citizens which lead to unity and strength of Canadian society. These impressions arise after a reading of the work entitled *Leisure and Recreation in Canadian Society—An Introduction* by professor George Karlis from the University of Ottawa. His book is at the same time informative and courageous for he has taken on the challenge of explaining to the reader the complexity of leisure and recreation phenomena in modern Canadian society.

The organizational structure of the book is conceived for the pedagogical process of post-secondary courses which cover the subject of leisure and recreation concepts in the Canadian society. Each chapter begins with a set of learning objectives and concludes with study questions which allow one to review and examine in more detail the themes studied. There are also lists of key concepts and selected Web sites in order to further probe each chapter's subject. This approach is profitable for students because it enables them to integrate more academic material into the chapter. In this textbook professors will find well developed objective presentations of the different themes so as to help in the transmission of knowledge. There are extensive bibliographic references and an index at the end of the book, as well as detailed tables, graphs, and photographs throughout the text which provide illustrative support of the subjects covered.

This present edition is divided into 13 chapters. The first chapter covers the reasons for studying leisure and recreation in the Canadian

society, followed by an introduction to the leisure and recreation services industry, and ending with a conclusion which explains the meaning of being Canadian through leisure and recreation. The second chapter brings out the conceptualization of leisure, recreation, play within Canadian-based research endeavours. The third chapter takes a historical view of leisure and recreation in Canada. The fourth chapter examines the public sector of leisure and the quest for a National Policy. The fifth chapter explores the commercial sector of recreation, the sixth chapter concentrates on one of the most important facets of leisure service delivery, the voluntary sector, while the seventh chapter studies the connections between leisure, recreation, and the development of the local community. In the eighth chapter, the concepts of culture, multiculturalism, and ethnicity as experienced through leisure and recreation are investigated. The ninth chapter examines leisure and recreation for Canadian aboriginal peoples. The tenth chapter discuss the leisure and recreation activities of Canadians while also exploring research that deals with leisure and recreation of the homeless, youth, women, the aged, and special populations. The eleventh chapter is dedicated to the subject of tourism in Canada. The twelfth chapter gives a general overview of university and college programs in leisure studies across Canada, and research journals and conferences in leisure studies are outlined for information purposes. Finally, the thirteenth chapter explores the most important social trends occurring in Canada and that may, in some way, have an direct impact in leisure and recreation practices in the near future.

This text is also useful for workers in leisure and recreation as it gives a good overview of many aspects of their profession in a national perspective. In order to help in making of management decisions throughout their different spheres of activity such as the public, the commercial and the voluntary sectors, workers in leisure and recreation face increasing importance in understanding their profession in the context of demographic, multicultural, ethnic, and social change. The text offers a clear understanding of why it is important to continue to study leisure and recreation in order to assist in community development and to better serve society as a whole. Starting from that basis, the intent of the author is to communicate to leisure and recreation professionals the meaning of different concepts, history, and practices in preparing the ground for appropriate services which can satisfy the recreation and leisure needs of Canadian citizens seeking optimization of their quality of life.

The textbook highlights many interesting issues. One of them is the role of multiculturalism and ethnicity in the mosaic of Canada identity.

Multiculturalism is in evolution as the world is changing. Thus, the author holds that multiculturalism is not a fixed ideal. He defines culture as being a social construct which evolves according to the way in which we understand and experience our life on an everyday basis. The way we talk and act in our social life determines our culture. However, in defining the complexity of Canadian culture, it may be difficult to achieve a common understanding of what Canada should be because we may perceive attributes of culture differently according to religion, language, social, media, and the arts. It may even be difficult to share common values among Canadians. The dialogue between English and French citizens is continuously necessary for the make-up of Canadian society. In addition, leisure and recreation pursuits can be a strategic point for the construction of Canada's cultural mosaic in that we can experience leisure and recreation activities true to our own ethnic roots, as well as having the opportunity to interact in intercultural leisure and recreation activities.

Another issue that attracts our attention is the historical importance for a national policy on recreation. As the author suggests, one of the greatest criticisms of the Canadian political system made by those in the leisure and recreation profession is that Canada does not have yet a firm national policy on recreation that recognizes its importance. One of the reasons may have been the impact of World War II on the economy, employment, and social services including leisure and recreation. However, recreation should be considered a basic right in Canada for the benefit of the physical and spiritual welfare of all citizens. Recreation is a way to regenerate and restore the social fabric wherein Canadians have the potential to develop fully their humanity in a free country. As Karlis states, education is a cornerstone to reinforce "recreational completeness" in Canadian society in that leisure and recreation practitioners, administrators, professionals, academics, and students can be multiplying agents in bringing questions of consciousness, opportunity, accessibility, and recognition to the fore.

A preoccupation of this textbook is in assuring the social growth of leisure and recreation in Canada. In the last chapter, the author examines the future of leisure and recreation in Canada in exploring the social and demographic challenges in Canada's population. Karlis identifies some social trends which may have an impact on leisure and recreation such as globalization, the ageing of Canadian society and health care, immigration, youth and violence in our communities, gender issues of equality and discrimination, and finally the increasing separation between the rich and the poor including obstacles to participation and poverty. Professio-

nals will find this last chapter informative in the construction of their programs for the promotion of leisure and recreation in a changing Canada society. Furthermore, as Karlis himself expresses, there will be an increasing spiritual quest for meaning in our lives. In that sense, a humanistic scenario may enhance the social welfare dimension of leisure and recreation which may lead to a legitimate, practical leisure ethic. In conclusion, this textbook serves as an important course manual for students or reference for practitioners seeking a better understanding of leisure and recreation in Canada.

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