RECR 4400 – W01

# Effective Methods for Lifeguard Retention and Enhancing Retention Strategies

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## Executive Summary

Lifeguard retention ensures the overall effectiveness and consistent safety of the aquatic facilities. The shortage of lifeguards had caused significant challenges for aquatic facilities, which led to inadequate staffing numbers, decreased morale among lifeguards, and limited safety supervision. As a result of high lifeguard turnover rate during the pandemic, there was a limited number of staff and new guards were hired and trained to meet the appropriate staffing numbers. This caused a concern for the general safety of the public, the efficiency of emergency situations, and shortened operational (Butson et al, 2021a).

Lifeguard retention continues to be an important factor that must be considered in lowering turnover rates and keeping the appropriate amount of staffing numbers to maintain a safe and efficient aquatic facility. A few factors that were linked to sustaining the retention of lifeguards were retention metrics, overall safety, job satisfaction, career development, and management strategies (Buston et al, 2021b)

A study was conducted through primary research which included informal interviews with lifeguards who were already working for the City of Richmond, visual observations of Minoru Centre for Active Living on three separate occasions, and a content analysis on City of Richmond Aquatics documents such as the lifeguard handbook, orientation and training materials, and lifeguarding expectations. In addition, a literature review was also conducted to review the existing research information on lifeguard retention. The result of the study concluded 3 specific key findings: handling difficult patrons with the support from the leadership team, more hands-on training, and opportunity to review skills, and addressing boredom during guarding.

## Introduction

Lifeguards are fundamental in ensuring the wellbeing of patrons, maintaining order, responding swiftly to emergencies, and enforcing safety standards within aquatic facilities. However, due to the shortage of lifeguards affecting aquatic facilities and

outdoor spaces nationwide, has emerged as a pressing concern. "Employee turnover has long been, and potentially will continue to be, a significant concern in the aquatics industry" (Buston et al, 2021, p33). Having to attract and retain qualified individuals in lifeguarding positions have become a significant challenge in the recreation field.

The turnover rates among lifeguards have presented multiple implications that caused a stir in adequate staffing. With high turnover rates due to the layoffs during the pandemic of 2020, it has disrupted staffing continuity as well as compromising the safety and efficiency of safety protocols thus endangering the lives of patrons in the aquatic environment.

Moreover, the costs and time associated with recruitment, hiring, and training of new lifeguards could place a significant strain on resources of the organization. Hence, the factors that are influencing lifeguard retention and devising effective strategies to mitigate turnover is crucial for ensuring the safety, sustainability, and effectiveness of the aquatic facilities.

This paper examines the factors influencing lifeguard retention and exploring some viable solutions towards lifeguard retention to alleviate the aftermath of lifeguard shortage while improving retention rates. Through synthesising existing research, drawing real-world experiences, and analyzing industry trends, this paper aims to provide an extensive understanding on lifeguard retention dynamics and offer actionable recommendations for aquatic facility managers and stakeholders.

The research question that is the basis for this paper is, "How can the retention of lifeguards be enhanced to ensure the sustained safety of aquatic environments, considering factors such as job satisfaction, professional development opportunities, and effective management strategies?" The key concepts revealed within the research question were:

1) **Retention Metrics** relates to the quantitative measures used to assess and track employee retention. It includes turnover rates, retention rates, average length of employment, and reasons for employee departure.

2) **Overall safety** refers to the comprehensive approach taken by the organization to ensure health, wellbeing, and physical security of stakeholders. This covers the measures that are enforced to prevent accidents, the response time to emergencies, and a culture of safety among staff and patrons.

3) **Job Satisfaction** is the level of fulfillment and satisfaction that employees experience within their roles in the organization. It comprises the factors of work environment, compensation, job responsibilities, opportunities for growth and advancement, and relationships between coworkers and the leadership team.

4) **Career development** includes the process of learning new skills, experiences, and knowledge to advance to a higher position and/or achieve professional goals. It includes support initiatives from organizations such as training and development programs, mentoring, coaching, and opportunities for promotion and advancement.

5) **Management strategies** encompassing the approaches, techniques, and practices used by the organizational leaders and managers to effectively lead, motivate, and support employees. This involves fostering a positive work environment, providing feedback and recognition, offering competitive compensation benefits, and implementing policies that promote a work-life balance and overall employee wellbeing.


## Background and Context

Lifeguard retention is crucial in keeping a safe aquatic facility for the community. Lifeguards serve as the frontline leaders and guardians of safety throughout the aquatic facility. They are responsible for ensuring that rules are being adhered to, responding to immediate emergencies as first responders in the scene, and surveillance of patrons utilizing the aquatic environment (MacMillian, 2008, p.1). Even though lifeguard retention had been, and still is, a nationwide concern, many municipalities are scrambling to ensure that the aquatic facilities can run properly and meet community needs for water based recreational activities (MacMillian, 2008, p.2).

The study was conducted in the City of Richmond, specifically at Minoru Centre for Active living. The demographic of the lifeguards at Minoru Centre ranged from 16 years of age to approximately 30 years of age. This range included high school students, fresh graduates, university students, and working adults.

The mission statement for the City of Richmond was to "protect and enhance the city's livability and economic well-being for current and future generations through: Visionary leadership and responsible decision making, accountable and sustainable fiscal practice, development of a unique and beautiful city, product and service excellence and efficiency, and community consultation" (City of Richmond, 2024, Departments Section). In the City of Richmond Recreation and Sport Strategy 2019-2024, the vision statement revealed that "Richmond is a leader in the planning and delivery of recreation and sport opportunities, inspiring individuals and communities to be active, connected and healthy for a lifetime" (City of Richmond Recreation and Sport Strategy 2019-2024, 2019, p3).

The Agency Advisor for this paper was Julie Kaufman, who had been working for the City of Richmond Aquatics for over a decade, is the Aquatics Supervisor at the Minoru Centre. Her responsibilities include day to day operations, program planning, writing reports and memos, reviewing budgets, hiring, and scheduling staff, as well as providing general supervision of the lifeguard team. Her role in the research paper was to provide guidance on the research topic of lifeguard retention through access to related documents, observations of the aquatic environment, and access to interviewing staff.

The researcher of this paper, Ellie Wong, is currently a lifeguard at the Minoru Centre. Her interest on the topic of lifeguard retention stemmed from her general experience of lifeguarding for City of Richmond Aquatics over the last couple of years. She had gone through the experience of having many staff available to work, having an extensive phone list to call staff to come in, and little to no shifts needing coverage. She has also experienced that as a shift supervisor during the lifeguard shortage, it was hard to find coverage and had to offer overtime opportunities in order to meet the appropriate staffing numbers to keep the facility and all of its amenities running. She wanted to learn more about the effects of lifeguard retention and what she could do to help the City of Richmond Aquatics and her colleagues.

As a researcher, Ellie has gone through confirmation bias during her research. She overcame this by recognizing the existence of her biases and acknowledging the potential influence it can have on her research. Ellie would question her own assumptions and preconceptions by actively monitoring them through out her research. She also found that interviews with the diverse team of lifeguard staff were very helpful in learning the different perspectives and experiences each interviewee had.

## Literature Review

Lifeguards are crucial for keeping a safe and enjoyable aquatic environment for patrons in the community. They "protect lives and provide first response in fatal and nonfatal emergencies" (MacMillian, 2008, p.363). High turnover rates could cause an increase in employee burnout, lack of work-life balance, slow response times, and increased chances of risk and accidents occurring in the facility. This literature review aims to identify factors that influence lifeguard retention as well as address the lifeguard turnover issue and explore strategies that were used to address turnovers.

### Methods

The research question that is the basis for this literature review is "How can the retention of lifeguards be enhanced to ensure the sustained safety of aquatic environments, considering factors such as job satisfaction, professional development opportunities, and effective management strategies?"

Key words such as "employee retention", "lifeguard", "employee turnover", and "retention strategies" were used to search for relevant articles. The inclusion criteria include strategies on lifeguard retention and employee retention. The exclusion criteria include criminal law, hospital staffing, and other skill retention related terms that were not related to lifeguarding.

Factors that influenced lifeguard retention were divided into several themes which include "Safety of aquatic environments", "Job satisfaction", "Professional Development

opportunities", and "Effective management strategies". These factors play an important role in determining the retention rates of lifeguards.

## Retention Metrics

Ever since the shortage of lifeguards have occurred due to the pandemic, there is an increase in demand for lifeguards after the re-opening of aquatic facilities and recreational waterfront spaces. Due to the pandemic, "leisure and hospitality industries have a high turnover rate of 51%" (Popescu & Ciorei, 2023, p62). Lifeguard retention was affected when lifeguard trainings were stopped for 2 years (Kelly, 2023). Many of the auxiliary lifeguards who did not receive any shifts or were temporarily laid off have sought other jobs during the pandemic, there were no replacement lifeguards (Rios, 2022). This is reflected in Figure 1 (See Appendix A) where a significant absence in lifeguards was reflected in the bar chart due to layoffs.

Additionally, high turnover rates and hiring new staff can be quite time consuming and costly for the organizations. This increases the "financial resources and loss of talent and expertise" (Popescu & Ciorei, 2023, p.62).

Young employers and university students were also more likely to leave after a few years because they are "less attached to the organization" (Buston et al, 2021a, p.1). University students often work lifeguarding jobs because they offer flexibility around their busy school schedules.

There was also the generalization of Lifeguarding being "monotonous and unappealing" since it was seen as a "temporary stepping stone for other positions" and not a career that could be done long term (Buston et al, 2021a, p.1). Because of the generalization, lifeguards were more likely to seek other opportunities that would be more appealing, interesting, and had a higher salary.

## Overall Safety

Safety of Aquatic environments is something that needs to be addressed hand in hand with lifeguard retention. Because lifeguard shortages have diminished the number of staff working in aquatic facilities, operational hours and effective response times toward emergencies are affected.

Lifeguarding can be a repetitive and uneventful at times, this could affect the quality of lifeguarding when "lifeguards are distracted with other staff or patrons" (Griffiths, 2003, p320). This leads to a decrease in safety at the pool and possible risks in drowning due to a lack of prevention. Another factor to consider was the RID Factor, discovered by Frank Pia from 1919-1980. It explains how lifeguards can miss drownings by the combination of three factors: "Failure to Recognize signs of distress, Intrusion of non-lifeguard duties, and Distraction from surveillance duties" (Palm, 1993, p.23). With these three factors coming into play, it could increase the possibility of drowning incidents. Lifeguards must eliminate such distractions in order to properly supervise and decrease any potential accidents. To alleviate boredom, it [was] important for lifeguards to have "regular in-service training to refine lifesaving skills" as well as "increasing motivation and good communication skills" (Griffiths, 2003, p.332).

## Professional Development and Opportunities

When addressing professional development and opportunities, lifeguards are looking for opportunities for growth after they have reached the maximum pay grade. "Lifeguards leave their current position after gaining enough experience to move up to a higher paying position" (Buston et al, 2021, p.38). Lifeguarding is also seen as a "temporary position" that provide skills and learning opportunities to promote to other careers (Buston et al, 2021, p.37).  Although there are much higher paying positions related to lifeguarding, there are very limited available positions.

On the other hand, lifeguards can be provided opportunities for growth through another perspective. Lifeguards can benefit from having "input during Inservice, establishing policies and rules, as well as being part of the decision-making process at aquatic facilities" (Griffiths, 2003, p332). Lifeguards will have the opportunity to utilize their skills for the public good. In addition, providing continuing education in forms of paid additional training beyond what is received at the facility made lifeguards felt appreciated and loyal to the workplace (Griffiths, 2003, p.333).

There are also lifeguards who are happy to remain lifeguards since they were satisfied with the amount of responsibility they had. For instance, some lifeguards who had some experiences in head guarding and overseeing the lifeguard team and pool operations

would prefer to go back to regular lifeguarding due to having more responsibilities that were too overwhelming for them. Some lifeguards came into work just for the sake of making money and performing their tasks then go home right after their shift, opting for simplicity and focusing on generating income.

## Job Satisfaction

In job satisfaction, a content analysis from a study proved that lifeguards leave due to four main reasons "Lifeguarding being a temporary position, a negative working environment, pursuing employment in a higher paying lifeguard position and location" (Buston et al, 2021a, p.1). Individuals also leave their positions due to "ineffective communication related to job expectations and requirements, lack of opportunity for career advancement, and ineffective training" (Anvari, JianFu, & Chermahini, 2014, p.187).

Lifeguarding heavily relies on "Team-building activities [to] increase lifeguard morale and motivation" (Griffiths, 2003, p.332). Team building activities encourage communication between employees while deepening a sense of understanding and camaraderie. A statistic-based poll was conducted in the US, and it was found that lifeguards in the US were also around the average age of 26 years old (Zippia, 2023). Since most lifeguards are around the range of teenagers to young adults, it was advised that "socialization should be encouraged during the appropriate time and after hours" (Griffiths, 2003, p.332). Because the lifeguards are within that age range, they are also attending university and required flexibility and balance between the two.

Post secondary students have specific needs that need to be met, and this was met through shorter shifts or flexible working hours (Buston et al, 2021a). Flexibility also offers lifeguards an opportunity to balance between personal life and work life. "Flexible working arrangements increase employee retention" and this benefits the lifeguards who are still studying in school or working a second job (Popescu & Ciorei, 2023, p.67).

## Management Strategies

A few effective management strategies that motivate lifeguards include creating reward systems and "work engagement through training empowerment" since it led to an

increase in job satisfaction and retention" (Deery & Jago, 2015). This encouraged lifeguards feel valued and appreciated in their position since they are being recognized for their efforts in providing excellent customer service and going out of their way to better serve the community and becoming a strong asset to their team. More opportunities for recognition foster a "positive work environment and improve employee morale" (Popescu & Ciorei, 2023, p.68). Finding "timely and meaningful forms of recognition" is also beneficial in showing recognition for the work that lifeguards do to keep the community safe (Romine, 2000, p.62).

Managers could also encourage retention through "enhanced learning experiences, supportive cultural acceptance in the workforce, and offer flexibility at work" to create a safe and meaningful work environment (Roberts et al, 2002, p.44). Career advancements such as "clear career paths, promotions, and opportunities for employees to take on new responsibilities and challenges" encourages them to commit and remain with the organization" (Popescu & Ciorei, 2023, p.68). Providing "attractive benefit programs" would also encourage more lifeguards to stay, especially those who are in auxiliary positions (Macmillan, 2008, p.364).

## Discussion

Work culture is a major factor that needs to be considered in the retention of lifeguards. A positive work environment can create a welcoming and safe environment for staff to connect with one another. If the work environment becomes too negative, lifeguards were more likely to leave because they felt unsafe in their working environment. A negative organizational culture could cause lifeguards to leave their workplace if the team culture has not improved" (Buston et al, 2021a, p.38). Workload and staffing levels are crucial to create an operational facility and a safe environment for the community.

Another related controversial topic is the public perception and trust towards lifeguards. Turnover rates can affect the safety of pool operations and adequate response times (Buston et al. 2021a). With these factors being affected, it can lead to increased oversight and higher risk of public safety.

Furthermore, another consideration is the work to life balance factor and how shortage of staff can hinder this. It has been known that "employees with heavier workloads lacked work to life balance and demonstrated poor job performance" (Deery & Jago, 2015, p.1).

Factors related to poor job performance include stress, overwork, exhaustion, and boredom and this eventually leads to burnout and a group of unmotivated employees looking for a career change. Lifeguards are looking for "shorter or fewer shifts" and this could be a solution to prevent overworking and burnout (Kelly, 2023, p.1).

More intensive research is needed for this study to evaluate the long-term effects after the strategies have been implemented in aquatic facilities to increase staff retention.

## Methodology

The primary research plan was to seek recommendations and personal experiences in relation to the research question through interviews, observations, and content analysis. The research methods used to collect data in relation to the research question were interviews, observations, and content analysis.

### Interviews

When requesting for volunteers to interview, a mass email was sent to the entire City of Richmond Aquatics staff on to ensure everyone can participate. Most of the interviews were conducted via phone since it was the most convenient form of communication for the staff that participated in the interviews. On some days, there were a few meetings conducted over zoom when the participants had enough time to spare during their day.

To ensure the participants could participate in the interviews, it was essential for both sides to communicate back and forth to make sure everyone was on the same page with the chosen meeting time and date. Everyone who participated in the interview were given the choice to remain anonymous or have their answers cited with their names within the paper.

The interviews started on February 27th, 2024 and remained open until March 8th,2024. The times and dates were scheduled from February 29th,2024 to March 3rd,2024 with most interviews occurring on February 29th. 18 participants were interviewed during through out the week and all interviewees City of Richmond - Aquatics staff ranging from junior lifeguards to shift supervisors and senior guards (See Appendix B).

The lifeguards were the best source to gather primary research information because they have experienced firsthand what lifeguarding was like throughout their career. They had expertise in their field of work and had access to valuable data from trainings and inservices. This was the reasons as to why they were chosen to participate in the interviews.

## Observations

The observations were conducted on March 5th, 2024, until March 9th, 2024. During the observations, the following interactions were observed: staff to staff, staff to leadership team, staff to patrons, and staff to user groups. Two types of observations were conducted: Special Status and General Status observations.

The observations were planned with having morning, midday, and evening observations varying from weekday to weekend environments. This allows a general perspective of the facility and the comparison between peak hours and slow hours throughout the days of the week.

The research was done on three separate occasions:

- MCAL - March 6th from 10:00 am-12:00 pm (General and Special Status observation)
- MCAL - March 7th from 6:30pm-7:30pm (General observation)
- MCAL - March 9th from 2:00 pm-3:00 pm (General and Special Status observation)

Some ethical considerations during research include the privacy, dignity, and rights of the lifeguards. This included permission from the shift supervisors, confidentiality of the staff, and minimizing disruptions to lifeguards during observation.

## Content Analysis

The contents were provided by the Agency Advisor when requested. The documents that were analyzed in the content analysis process were from the City of Richmond Aquatics Department:

**Instructor Lifeguard Orientation Manual** – The handbook gives the general overview of the City, Lifeguard positions and duties, swim instructor expectations, facility layout and operations, online scheduling system (Schedule Force), and shadow guarding expectations. This is a good overview of the general tasks and expectations that new guards can learn what to expect when they first start their job as a lifeguard for the City of Richmond.

**Aquatics FAQ** – The FAQs is a small packet that states the different temperatures of the pools, the general rules and etiquette that patrons must follow, and how to use certain equipment around the pool. This is good for guards who need a refresher on the rules and etiquette as it can be found readily available in a designated binder at the guard room.

**Aquatics Instructor Lifeguard** - Orientation Checklist (See Appendix A, Figure. 4) – The orientation checklist exposes new staff to where things are located around the facility and how they can find them. Some items include AED and focal points, Teach boxes, Fire panels, and general guidelines and procedures. Generally, a designated senior staff or head guard leads the new staff to the items on the check list, similar to a game of "I Spy" in an aquatic setting.

**Aquatics Facility Orientation Lesson Material** (Figure 3.) – The Lesson Material explains the equipment that is needed for swim lessons which include report cards, attendance sheets, and other materials for teaching. The Lesson Material sheet also includes asking any Aquatic Leader or Head Guard for assistance when required during lessons, swim evaluations, and report card writing.

**Ripple Effects Presentation** – The presentation provides a general description of the lifeguard shortage throughout the years (Figure 1.) and how the pandemic has caused a major decrease of staff in 2020. It also highlights the general onboarding process for

soon-to-be lifeguards (Figure 2.). It includes leaning about pool safety plans, FAQs, emergency procedures, swim lessons, first aid, guarding expectations, and shadow guard training procedures.

Some obstacles during the research phase include time constraints. Having a tight deadline was somewhat of an obstacle especially during data collection through interviews. The interviews were also stacked on top of one right after another and it felt a little bit rushed near the beginning of the interviews. To fix this obstacle, the interviews were scheduled to be more spaced out to ensure more time to prepare and compile the typed-out transcripts as the calls and zoom meetings went by.

Another obstacle was the access to participants, this includes privacy concerns and reluctance to participate. Potential participants had a week to think about participating in the study and some participants have offered to participate right away. It was important to state the clear instructions and expectations for the participants to ensure they know what was going on during the interviews. Some participants offered to participate in exchange for having the interview answers remain anonymous. Other participants were happy to share their answers regardless of the privacy concerns.

The last obstacle was the limited resources on lifeguard retention, it affected the scope of study in the beginning. There was a solution that helped with expanding the research further and it took searching key terms that was related to retention and hospitality to access more information that was related to lifeguard retention. Building on secondary research in related topics and collecting solid primary research evidence provided an opportunity to overcome the obstacle. The solid proof and experiences from lifeguards helped solidify the points that were found in the secondary research phase.

## Research Findings and Analysis

According to the current primary research that was conducted through-out the research process, the results were akin to the articles in the secondary research.

Difficult patrons and situations can also create a stressful situation for lifeguards since they must maintain a professional control over the situation to ensure a positive and

peaceful environment. The lifeguards that were interviewed were hoping for immediate support from the leadership team when dealing with rude or ill-mannered patrons that consistently break pool rules. This includes learning to remain composed and assertive, as well as establishing clear protocols for handling tough situations, providing consistent rules and expectations, and when to seek assistance from supervisors.

A key finding during the interview phase of the primary research was learning from the lifeguards that it was difficult to communicate to angry or difficult patrons. Dealing with difficult patrons can become a significant challenge for lifeguards tasked in ensure safety for all in aquatic environments. An example was when a staff voiced her concern over being sexualized by a patron and it left her feeling unsafe in the workplace (Shift Supervisor B, personal communication, February 29, 2024). Since it was unpleasant for the lifeguard to experience for something that is out of their control, it dampens the general lifeguarding experience.

Through observations, the lifeguards were generally performing their duties and ensuring that the pool was operational even during the hours when it was short staffed. (See Appendix C). There was evidence of teamwork between lifeguards when it came to adjusting lane ropes for user groups and reconfiguring the pool for feature use. Most lifeguards seem to be respectful with one another and would occasionally assist or show other lifeguards where things were located when equipment was moved to another spot. The general group chat for lifeguards were also useful in finding immediate coverage and have inquires answered as needed.

A key finding from the observation method was seeing the interaction between staff and other staff. Due to the nature of the job, it can become quite tedious for staff, especially when staff were guarding for more that 30 minutes. This causes staff to become quite "distracted with other staff or patrons" (Griffiths, 2003, p.320). To cut down on boredom and increase lifeguarding knowledge, it would benefit staff by notifying and encouraging them to participate in opportunities such as lifeguarding workshops and conferences, lifeguard competitions, and professional development opportunities that help build work related skills.

During the Content Analysis, the training and orientation materials generally provided policies, expectations, and detailed items to look for and where they were located. Contents such as lesson checklists and questions that help lifeguards reflect their teaching styles and evaluations prompted them to seek improvements and feedback.

Although there were some lifeguards who did not reach out for feedback for their own reasons, support and constructive feedback was delivered to staff in order to help them become good instructors that deliver quality swim lessons to the community. The orientation provided opportunities for new staff to ask questions and review important materials such as emergency procedures, pool safety plan, facility operations, review of first aid, and opportunities to shadow guard at multiple aquatic locations in Richmond prior to working their first shift. New guards "spend a specified time to job shadow a senior lifeguard to hone their skills" and learn how to keep the facility operational (MacMillan, 2008, p.3). Job shadowing ensures that new guards could slowly assimilate into the lifeguarding team and become a strong team player in maintaining a safe and welcoming aquatic environment.

A key finding during the content analysis method concluded that it would be very beneficial for new lifeguards to have more hands-on approach with the daily operational tasks such as water tests. Although there were checklists and videos provided during orientation, junior lifeguards wanted more opportunities to review and memorize the steps to complete specific tasks. A lifeguard voiced her opinion on how she often felt pressured to finish everything up on time and it led to stress and accidental mistakes that could have escalated to a bigger issue (Junior Lifeguard C, Personal Communication, February 29, 2024). Thus, it would take time to fix the mistakes which can be quite time consuming.

Although there were a few concerns and weaknesses that were brought up during the interview that correlated to the literary analysis, staff were generally quite content with their jobs and overall appreciated the "chill" workplace environment.

A contradicting factor in the research was the correlation between motivation and intrinsic rewards versus extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards include "interesting, challenging work and opportunities that allow room for growth to attain greater

responsibilities" (Malik & Naeem, 2013, p.1033). This was something that lifeguards wanted to see more in the workplace, they want more opportunities to feel recognized and valued in the workplace. On the contrary, extrinsic factors include "benefit programs that offer significant salary increases and bonuses to retain staff" (MacMillian, 2008, p.3). The City of Richmond provides a decent benefits package for part-time and full-time staff. Auxiliary staff also receive in lieu pay instead the benefits that add up in their paycheque. It was also noted that "motivation can be monetary or nonmonetary in nature" (MacMillian,2008, p3). Depending on the staff and what type of rewards they are seeking, both motivational options were beneficial in encouraging overall lifeguard retention. Although extrinsic rewards are out of the leadership's scope of control, they are able to provide intrinsic rewards and such.

## Recommendations

1) More recognition and reward opportunities for staff to increase motivation. Having recognition opportunities motivate lifeguards to perform better at their jobs. It offers them a self-esteem boost and helps them realize that they are performing their tasks correctly (Lifeguard E, Personal Communication, February 29, 2024). "Meaningfulness" was considered a major factor that "positively influences employee retention, and it was strengthened overtime" (Popescu & Ciorei, 2023, p.65). Kudos boards and guard of the week posts are effective in showcasing the efforts of the staff that perform an outstanding job, it also motivates other lifeguards to perform better on their duties while boosting morale. An example of recognition and reward opportunities would be offering a certificate for becoming the employee of the week or lifeguard merchandise such as customized whistles, fanny packs, sunglasses, and caps.

2) Quick and immediate action from leadership team on handling public relations, health concerns, and banning/removing patrons who are consistently breaking rules. A staff mentioned how he did not receive enough support to help with dealing with rude and difficult patrons (Lifeguard A, Personal communication, February 28, 2024). A few staff members also felt uncomfortable reaching out to the leadership team because they believe it was too much of a hassle or they may receive judgement or reprisal, so they keep it to themselves (A. Liu, Personal Communication, February 27, 2024).

A solution would be to create opportunities for lifeguard staff to address their concerns, this could be in a form of meeting slots that can be scheduled in-person or over zoom to encourage open dialogue discussions. Instead of focusing on the problem and blaming someone or something, redirecting the focus on understanding each other's perspective and coming up with a solution to resolve the problem would be much more effective in resolving conflicts and problems in the workplace.

3) More opportunities for professional growth and effective Inservice sessions with new knowledge and hands-on activity. A lifeguard voiced his concern over the lack of training opportunities offered. Some lifeguards also do not have access to the trainings because they did not realize that additional trainings within the city existed. In addition, it was important to focus on "employee engagement and satisfaction" since they were the "key drivers of retention" (Popescu & Ciorei, 2023, p.62).

Most lifeguards would like Inservice sessions to provide more fresh insight and engagement. Some lifeguards described that the Inservice sessions were "repetitive," especially for those who have worked in the organization for more that two years (T. Davies, Personal Communication, February 27, 2024). Some even voiced their concern over the topics that needed most coverage were not included in the Inservice sessions and they were hoping that the topics will be included in the next Inservice.

To address the demands, a survey could be conducted through google polls and mass emailed to all staff regarding the possible Inservice topics they could recommend. Additionally, a lifeguard training committee could be created by lifeguards who are looking to help improve the Inservice trainings just to turn these ideas into reality. The lifeguard training committee could also be an excellent environment for lifeguards to learn from each other and bond through socializing and teamwork activities.

4) More hands-on approach training during orientation. Junior guards found valuable insight during orientation, but they wanted more hands-on experience to boost their confidence in completing the operational jobs. A guard mentioned how the water test videos were useful but when it is incorporated with real life experience, it would help them learn better (Junior Lifeguard C, Personal Communication, February 29, 2024).

On a similar note, there are instances where junior lifeguards needed a bit more time to complete their tasks due to feeling inexperienced and not wanting to make mistakes for the sake of being reprimanded by more senior colleagues. Based on the availability of lifeguards, morning, and evening training sessions a few times per month could be created to help guards refine and hone their lifeguarding skills. For lifeguards who are looking to review their skills prior to recertifications and coming back to work after an injury, this would be quite beneficial in boosting their confidence in their lifesaving skills.

5) Enforcing respect, accountability, and empathy in the workplace environment. Most of the lifeguards that were interviewed felt like there were general lifeguard rules that were not being followed, with some lifeguards having double standards when enforcing rules (Junior Lifeguard A, Personal Communication, February 29, 2024).

It was noted that a "negative organizational culture was an additional reason for lifeguard turnover" (Buston et al, 2021a, p.1). This was also evident with senior guards enforcing rules to guards who have lesser seniority, but also breaking the rules themselves. This included cellphone use and late rotations that bore into the off-deck time that other lifeguards had, this reduces the efficiency of rotations and the completion of tasks. To some lifeguards, they felt like they were not being treated fairly (R. Ng, March 2nd, 2024). It is important for lifeguards to create a positive work environment by also holding their own actions accountable (Shift Supervisor A, Personal Communication, February 28, 2024). Introducing the platinum rule where lifeguards "treat others the way they want to be treated" offers a more empathetic approach and could encourage staff to be mindful of their actions and how it can affect others.

6) Maintaining a work-life balance within the organization. Regular check-ins with the staff to see how they are doing and scheduling adequate staff during peak hours to help lessen the stress. Stress and burnout were major factors in contributing towards employee's intention to leave the organization (Deery & Jago, 2015). This was evident for lifeguards who frequently dealt with patrons face-to-face, this includes supervisors and senior guards who step up to handle tough situations. To promote work-life balance in the workplace, it was critical for the leadership team to monitor the staff for their levels of work life balance (Deery & Jago, 2015).

## Conclusion

In summary, lifeguard retention is heavily influenced by factors that include job satisfaction, work to life balance, safety in the aquatic environment, opportunities for growth and development, and strategies that management use to retain lifeguards. Retention strategies include professional development and growth opportunities, prioritizing the health and well being of lifeguards through job satisfaction, and increasing public trust and community safety by enhancing retention rates. This includes offering recognition and acknowledgement to increased motivation, opportunities to grow by learn new and challenging tasks, and fostering a culture of appreciation and respect.

Moreover, effective management strategies also significantly contribute to lifeguard retention, and as a result, improves the safety of aquatic environments. This includes having clear communication, regular check-ins with staff, and creating a positive and safe work environment. Lifeguards who feel supported and valued by their supervisors were more likely to remain engaged and dedicated to their roles.

By acknowledging the factors that cause increased turnover rates by implementing retention strategies would not only benefit overall community safety, but also the lifeguards who are already working in the aquatic facilities by creating a stronger and united workforce. Aquatic facilities could create an environment where lifeguards feel valued for their work, supported and motivated, which could ultimately contribute to an effective, safe, and sustainable aquatic environment.

At the end of the day, most of the lifeguards working for the City of Richmond had a positive outlook on the general workplace environment and were very likely to introduce lifeguarding to their friends and family. Lifeguarding offered the flexibility that the students enrolled in school needed and appreciated the guidance provided by the leadership team in completing tasks. Most of the lifeguards have chosen to become lifeguards because they wanted to help their community flourish and had a desire to be near water. The pool brought back their memories of swimming in lessons and swim clubs, including their love for swimming.

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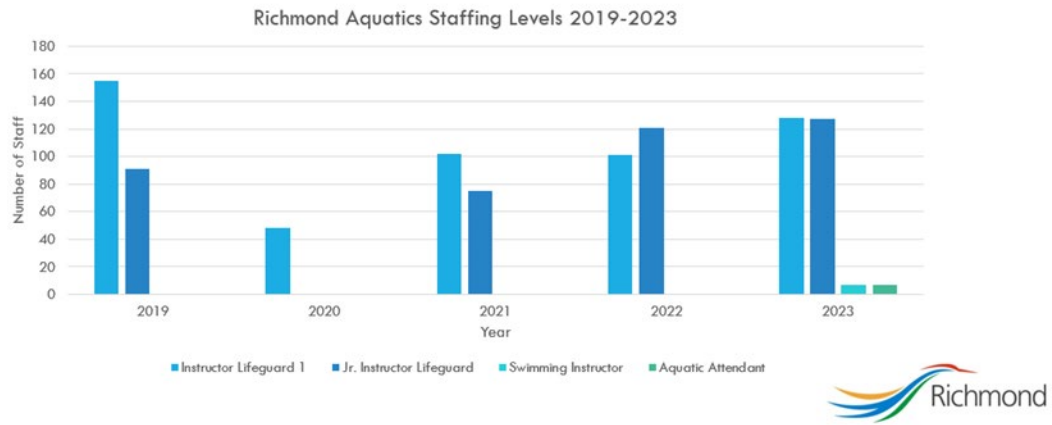https://www.zippia.com/pool-lifeguard-jobs/demographics/ (C)

## Appendix A



Figure 1.

## ONBOARDING

**Online Training (6.5 hours)**
- Pool Safety Plan
- FAQs
- Emergency Procedures
- Scheduling
- Administrative Tasks
- Candidates Complete Online Assessments and Hand In a Workbook

**In-Person Training (5 Hours)**
- Expands on online training topics
- Guarding, Roving and Rotations
- Facility Operations
- Lessons
- Rescues & First Aid

**Shadow Guard Training (6 Hours)**
- 2 Hours at Minoru Centre for Active Living
- 2 Hours at Watermania
- 1 Hour at South Arm Outdoor Pool
- 1 Hour at Steveston Outdoor Pool

Richmond

Figure 2.

## Lesson's Material

- Instructor's check list
- Books ( 4)
- Transition charts
- Instructor's binder and report card folder - Example
- Attendance class list / Worksheets
- Blank Report Cards / All levels
- Comment sheets
- Pens
- Badges and stickers
- Lesson Plans/ Long / short / Blank


- Welcome / attendance / Dist. Material
- Go over books / Resources Lesson plans, IC and AL
- On Board - Lesson program – Parent and tots – Pre-school – Swimmers – Patrols – Teen and Adults Report Cards Badges and Stickers
- Instructor's check list/ student's class list and worksheets / Report card/ comment sheet
- Evaluate student's / Complete the worksheet (half way)
- **Parent's Instructors day do's and Don'ts**
- Complete worksheet / C or I? / Report Card Do's and Don'ts
- Write a report card
- Patrol programs – Venn Diagram
- Assign participant' to lessons – 2 per class – the rest peer teaching – using the lesson's plans

Questions
1. What books you will use to plan your lessons?
2. What are the instructor's reference books?
3. Why it is important to start evaluating students every day?


Figure 3.

**MINORU CENTRE**
FOR ACTIVE LIVING

## Instructor Lifeguard - Orientation Checklist

**Staff person's name:** _____ **Signature:** _____

**IC signature that checklist has been completed:** _____

**Date:** _____

**Facility**
_____ Paddle keys / Fob
_____ Information / bulletin boards

**Paperwork**
_____ Schedule
_____ Flow chart
_____ Daily duties
_____ Red Cross and Lifesaving supplies
_____ Teach boxes
_____ Where to put report cards and instructor sheets at the end of a lesson set
_____ DNS cards
_____ Minor / Major forms
_____ Shift cancellation request form
_____ Violent behaviour report
_____ Theft incident report
_____ Suspicious person report

**Alarms: Location and Response**
_____ Fire panel & alarm pull stations
_____ Deck emergency alarms

**Procedures**
_____ Aquatic Procedure & Training Manual
_____ Bodily Fluid spills (land and water)
_____ Major first aid
_____ Missing person procedure
_____ Power Outage
_____ Fire Alarms

**Guard Committee Room**
_____ Phone etiquette (ans/hang up)
_____ Stereo

_____ Employee Assistance Program
_____ O.F.A. attendant
_____ Pool Safety Plan
_____ SDS
_____ How to report unsafe conditions
_____ PPEs

**Lifeguarding**
_____ Proper rotations, guarding, positioning
_____ Checking of change rooms
_____ Focal points/AED units
_____ Rotational check-in @ front desk
_____ Aquafit and Aquajogging equipment

**Guidelines**
_____ Instructing expectations
_____ Facility guidelines (Diving board, PFD's, slides)
_____ Heat source guidelines
_____ When to do jobs
_____ How to handle/refer PR's
_____ Non-paying patrons on deck
_____ Use of camera/video
_____ Hand signals
_____ Portable Lift
_____ Removable stairs
_____ Cleaning changes rooms, dispensers and drains

**Employee Safety**

628335

updated May 12, 2020

Figure 4.

# Appendix B

## Interview Transcripts

**Introduction script** – Hello, my name is Ellie Wong, and I am currently completing a major research project in lifeguard retention for the Langara Bachelor of Recreation Management Program. I am interviewing you today because I would like to know your general perspective on lifeguard retention. My research question is "How can the retention of lifeguards be enhanced to ensure the sustained safety of aquatic environments, considering factors such as job satisfaction, professional development opportunities, and effective management strategies?" The information that I will be collecting from this interview will be cited into my work as evidence in relation to the topic. I will be recording the interview by typing out your answers on Microsoft word.

**1) Person Interviewed – <span style="color:red">Shift Supervisor A</span>**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 28 at 10am**
**Location interviewed - Zoom**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*
What motivated me was seeing the lifeguards relaxing at a beach guard station made me see it as an enjoyable job. The money when employed by the city made me stick in it. Sure, I'd recommend it as a job.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
Work culture in this workplace is split into 80% a social circle where gossip, bonding through socialization and discussion of non workplace related things dominate the scene. The other 20% are split equally between a buildup of toxicity and negativity, and formation of outside of work ships of relations that flourish into meaningful friendships. If I could minimize the toxicity and gossip in the workplace I would, but human nature is hard to overcome.

*• What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

As a shift supervisor, my challenges in the workplace are split pretty evenly between dealing with employees and dealing with the public. This includes making sure senior staff are treating junior staff fairly, making sure junior staff are trained properly, dealing with the reasonable and unreasonable concerns form the public, and most importantly balancing my integrity as an employee versus my personal wants. This sometimes means saying no to friends, and this sometimes means disagreeing with what I personally believe to be right in favour of what is prescribed as proper by the employer (i.e. making concessions in rules for the sake of customer service). I would say that one out of four or five times there is a problem, I don't receive any meaningful support form the leadership team. It feels like I get left out to dry most of the time.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

Most training opportunities given to me by the city seemed pretty meaningless. The training sustained during them did not increase my field of knowledge, nor did it positively impact my job satisfaction. On the contrary, it frustrated me that my employer invested money in training that was meaningless and unhelpful.

**2) Person Interviewed- <span style="color:red">Shift Supervisor B</span>**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 2:30pm**
**Location interviewed- Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**

*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

I really enjoyed swimming and being a part of a team that works towards safety as a team that brings different perspectives. I would not recommend to friends and family though as the standards are tough and should be routinely kept up, and i would want them to show interest first before supporting them, but would support and warn them if they brought it up first

*• In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
Depends on your pool really and who is in "charge" but generally goofy and yet sexualized. We have a level of stress in the back of our heads as we are the first responders to situations, so we try to keep each other up and light, and yet sometimes we are sexualized by the public and each other, which still brings us up in way, but could risk excluding people who don't feel that way or don't want to feel that way. Which turns to what I would change, we shouldn't be sexualized by anything as we are to be respected for working so hard being ready to help with any kind of crazy that happens, we should be respected enough by our bosses that when we say someone needs to be spoken to, removed, or banned, to be taken seriously.

*• What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?* I was not respected for my age, the staff was not even taking what I'm saying seriously, as I'm trying to remind them kindly, then sternly, then factually. I can only do so much to discipline the team, I do get some tips from Aquatic Supervisors but its not enough, I believe they should be handling disciplinary actions much more effectively. I don't believe that reprimanding the team should fall directly on me to risk my relationships that keep the pool staffed.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
Training opportunities are great, lots of them, and are usually left lacking, or missing the point entirely. Inservice is the same, and they ask the seniors to help run which is fine, but it's a break from the everyday which is the main point and appreciated as a change is already upbringing.

3) **Person Interviewed – <span style="color:blue">Lifeguard A</span>**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 28 at 3pm**
**Location interviewed - Zoom**

**Interview Questions with Answers**

• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

I was motivated to become a lifeguard because our family friends were lifeguards too, so it was my dream job even as a little kid. I guess I would recommend it.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

It is a pretty chill culture. One thing I would change is the interaction between lifeguards since some lifeguards can be quite toxic or lack empathy. Overall, I made some good friends working here.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

Some challenges were dealing with aggressive patrons, although patrons were given a place to complain about us, we had no similar place to do the same and reflect our side of the situation. As well, they are barely given a talking to while we get in trouble for enforcing the rules.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

In-service I find is a good time to bond with new staff and I do find the customer service training and some of the emergency procedures that we practice for each specific pool are very helpful to review.

**4) Person Interviewed – <span style="color:green">Junior Lifeguard A</span>**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 1 pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**

• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

As a newcomer to Canada, I need a reliable job to survive, and lifeguarding has great meaning for saving lives. Yes, I would recommend.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
Everyone is equal, and willing to take their responsibility. One thing I would change is no workplace bullying such as special no double standards.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
Yes, I believe it's workplace bullying. One example would be a guard who would be really strict to others guards about having no cell phones, no eating, and must rotate on time, but he would play on his phone with his friends in the guard room, eating and being late for work and not rotating or rotating late when it was time for him to rotate. Not seeking for support as I'm not working with him often.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
Training has made me feel much comfortable in dealing with emergencies.

5) **Person Interviewed - Lifeguard B**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 5pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*
I became a lifeguard because some of my friends from swim club wanted to do it so I did it with them, and I would recommend it to my friends and family.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

In my perspective, the work culture here is very open and diverse because the age range of the workers, if I can change one thing about the work culture it would be having the managers being more strict on hiring process.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
One big challenge I faced during lifeguarding is two summers ago during a heatwave and due to staff shortages and the AC was broken at Watermania, the work environment was unbearable, and that I don't think the leadership team did enough for it.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
I don't think Inservice has any significant impact on our knowledge on lifeguarding, but I do enjoy Inservice as a team bonding opportunity.

**6) Person Interviewed – Lifeguard C**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 4:30pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*
My main motivator was that this job made good money and had a high pay. I would recommend this job for those who are looking for a high pay entry level job.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
Work culture is mixed, kind of toxic with people who stick around for a long time (depending on the type of people), I have also met people who were nice and made good friends. Management could put in more effort in caring about our health in general

when we have complaints. For the work culture, I'd change the acceptance of others and understanding.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
One of the main challenges was elitism, allowing incompetent people to become supervisors. Another challenge was the health issues such as the air quality of the pool and high trichloramine levels. I did not receive much support from the leadership team until it was absolutely necessary. There is not much intervention by management regarding to the behavioural issues that people have.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
Inservice is only useful for your first two years, after that it becomes quite repetitive and pointless besides the one with the first aid recert.

**7) Person Interviewed - Lifeguard D**
**Date and time of Interview - March 3 at 12pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*
What motivated me to become a lifeguard was that when I was 15, I had a family friend who was a lifeguard and he told me a lot about it and it made me want to do it as well. I had always really enjoyed swimming, so this was a job that seemed interesting to me. I would recommend this job to family and friends, especially if they are interested in swimming and first aid. It's a great job to have as a student, it allowed me to move to Canada and study here so I would definitely recommend it to anyone who is studying.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

I think in Richmond the work culture is good. I always enjoy coming to work and get along with my coworkers. One thing I would change is that I find the nature of the job. It can be so boring at times, and sometimes there is not much to do. I would also change the leadership (especially some supervisors) to become less micromanaging because the work can be very slow. They compensate by delegating/micromanaging too much what everyone should be doing. However, in Richmond it's rare I see this happening compared to other workplaces where it was more frequent and extreme, but it does occasionally happen with certain people. Overall though I am extremely happy with the workplace culture of Richmond, it's the best place I I've worked at in BC.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
One challenge I have faced as a lifeguard is dealing with rude or creepy patrons. In situations where I felt uncomfortable, I told my supervisor, and they immediately supported me and dealt with the situation. I felt happy with the outcome and that the leadership team has always supported me when this happens.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
I think that Inservice and trainings are helpful to me as an employee because I learn new things and it gives me refreshers of certain aspects of my job. As a lifeguard there is so much of your knowledge and skills that you don't have to use in everyday life, so it's nice to have the refreshers and makes me a better lifeguard.

**8) Person Interviewed – Lifeguard E**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 4:30pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

I like the feeling of swimming personally, and I think if I could be the lifeguard I could save others' lives, which makes me get the sense of achievement. I would recommend this job to my friends and family for sure. It is a good paid job as a startup part-time individual. It could be helpful to improve our teamwork, cooperation, and leadership.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
The culture would be similar like military. Focusing on the priority and finishing the assigned task accurately and efficiently. Trying to focus on the prevention instead of making up. The structure is good enough.

•*What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
Sometimes, accidence would be coming without expectation. We need to calm down firstly before the public and act quickly and correctly as we trained. Multi-tasking would be difficult sometimes, but it is crucial for lifeguard. I received the support when it is needed. The teammates always try to cover each other and give the support in time.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
The training could make sure all lifeguards could deal with the tasks based on the procedure and regulation. Inservice training could help us get to know the latest policy update and what we should improve based on the observation while we are working. Pointing out the problem with the constructive suggestion is so important.

9) **Person Interviewed – Junior Lifeguard B**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 27 at 9pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**

*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

My dad used to be a lifeguard and it was the first job he planned out for me ever since I was in grade 8. So, I just did all the bronze courses and NL until I got hired. Yes, I would recommend this job to family and friends.

*• In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

The work culture is chill. At times, I do get intimidated by older lifeguards, but I think that's normal for every job. If I could change one thing it would be to have a little more sympathy regarding intimidation towards younger lifeguards such as I, but I understand it does give us the experience we need to work.

*•What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

Some challenges I've faced during lifeguarding was often zoning out or getting distracted easily. Another thing is preparation and worrying about forgetting lifeguarding procedures. The leadership team have been very nice and understanding.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

Inservice is fun. I enjoy them. Although at times I sometimes feel like the pool should be shut down from the public during Inservice for clarity and organization.

**10) Person Interviewed-** <span style="color:green">**Junior Lifeguard C**</span>
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 3pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

For Med school, it is a good first step, helps with understanding and thinking critically, lots of hands-on experience with first aid, I do recommend this job and it pays lots of money, a positive community when I rotate off deck and connect with other guards.

*• In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
Pretty chill environment but would like change on expectations of knowing everything immediately after shadowing/orientation. Through orientation it was learning through videos of how to do a water test, wish there was a more hands-on in-depth orientation. More guards needed especially at Minoru because there would be no rotations for 1 hour most times.

*•What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
Chill shifts overall, only time that was difficult was a major and not enough guards until whistle is blown. The guards were off doing jobs or rotating around changerooms at that time.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
Inservice can be helpful, my first Inservice was a lot of time filling activities and redoing online courses as a group, they felt repetitive and a waste of time, but we got paid for it and didn't really care much about the training. The Inservice could have been more productive, we sat in class and did not feel engaged through watching videos and presentations instead of having a more hands on experience and overall engagement.

11) **Person Interviewed – Alexander Liu - Lifeguard**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 27 at 2:30pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**

*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

I became a lifeguard because of a person I knew who convinced me to give it a go. That and given my swimming background, it made sense to me to pursue it. I would recommend this job to another person.

*• In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

Work culture can be quite fun given the right team of people but there's also definitely palpable tension here and there between people. One thing I would change if I could is the way management functions for us. I'd hope that they would help us guards and have our backs more often. Have them be more present so that issues that the guard team experiences aren't completely foreign to them, as it currently feels like it's management plus patron vs guards.

*• What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching?*
*How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

Not knowing some emergency procedures that are "real life" as all I had previously learned was from NL, which I found to be not fully sufficient for me to do my job properly. No, I didn't receive support from the leadership team, partly because I didn't speak up but also partly because the work culture at the time seems to view lack of experience/knowledge as a negative first, educate second sort of thing.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

In-services are useful every once in a blue moon, but most often I found them to be unrelated from points that I think needs more attention. It doesn't make me like or dislike the overall experience as an employee.

**12) Person Interviewed – Tyler Davies - Lifeguard**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 27 at 2pm**

**Location interviewed - Phone**

**Interview Questions with Answers**

• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

My mom had me in swimming lessons for as long as I remember. She claims she only recommended that I work as a lifeguard, but I remember her explicitly telling me that I will be a lifeguard. I am grateful she pushed me to such a good job. I would recommend it to younger people as they have the time and their parent's money to take the required certifications. As people get older, they just can not afford the time and money investment of becoming a lifeguard.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

The culture is generally relaxed. I remember thinking when I first got hired that I really enjoyed the people I work with, I still do. We forgive each others genuine mistakes, we cover for each others needs, and we talk like friends, many people are close friends. I think it can get too relaxed, and people start rotating late.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching?*
*How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

Difficult patrons. From the angry, arrogant, and egotistical to the downright stupid. Everyone for their own reasons always wants to do things their own way, even though the guy who is guarding their life is telling it's a bad idea. My main takeaway from being a lifeguard that I always tell people is "people are never as smart as they think they are".

Senior guards and head guards have always had my back and I am quite grateful for all the times I was put into a difficult situation, and they helped me out of it, because they literally dealt with the same thing last week.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

I don't think Inservice and impact my satisfaction all that much. Perhaps I feel a little disappointed, because we could be focusing on things like packaging wounds or niche emergencies. But we generally focus on something well known and missing person searches (which is good to practice). Recently I am generally disappointed in the leadership as there is a serious health concern and I feel like nothing is ever being done and any official information is corporate and half truths.

**13) Person Interviewed – <span style="color:orange">Linden Redekop - Lifeguard</span>**
**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 10:30am**
**Location interviewed - Zoom**

**Interview Questions with Answers**
• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*
I was motivated by my parents and was further encouraged by the wage that municipalities competitively offer. I would 100% recommend this job to friends and family.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
Work culture is relaxed but serious when required. If I could change anything I would modify how management interacts with lifeguards.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching?*
*How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
I struggled to make it through long days of work, especially long teaching shifts. I was not provided support on this because I did not reach out regarding it.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

I appreciate the training opportunities that are brought to the guards' attention through external workplace group chats, but I do not believe Inservices offer much room for growth.

**14) Person Interviewed – Ryan Ng - Lifeguard**
**Date and time of Interview - Mar 2 at 1:30pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**

• *What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

My mom pushed me to take swim lessons as a child and eventually, she heard about lifeguarding courses and found out that it's a really good job that pays well for the teenage demographic and forced me to do it. When I was younger, I didn't like it, the courses were long and took a lot of effort, but I don't regret it now and I'm glad my mom pushed me to do it. I would recommend it to others; however, I wouldn't recommend it to those who are uninterested in swimming, or aquatics or are not proficient at swimming.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

I think the current state of the work culture is toxic. I feel like the workplace is run by teenagers and it gives a high-school vibe. I don't like it. I think a more forgiving and supportive management and higher-ups would be beneficial. I also feel like people who are regular headguards tend to have a power trip over others. There are no clear leaders in the workplace, and it makes it extremely difficult to feel like I'm working towards a greater cause.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

A lot of micromanaging throughout my duration as a lifeguard. I don't like it when I feel unsafe at work, where I feel that people are always watching or judging me for what I'm doing and finding every moment to make me feel bad about the things I messed up on.

The leadership currently is very lacklustre, and I feel like we have very few strong leaders at the moment which is why I try to avoid certain work times and locations.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
Inservice doesn't tackle the main issues, I honestly don't think that Inservice has been helpful for me in the last 4 years. I think it does a good job of educating younger guards, but for someone like me who has been around for a while now, nothing that has been taught during Inservice is new or interesting.

**15) Person Interviewed – Jashan Dhillon – Junior Lifeguard**

**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 3:30pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*
So, when I was little my parents sent me to the YMCA very often for swim lessons and just because they also wanted to go to the pool. Because of this frequency I developed a close relationship with the guards through swim lessons and the Junior Lifeguard Club (JLC) and eventually I was recommended to join bronze by one of my instructors that I was very close with. I would go on to complete the rest of the lifeguarding courses as well, mainly because I just wanted to hang out with my lifeguard friends more often. I would recommend this job to friends and family but they often do not want to do it because of the pre requisites.

*• In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
The work cultures pretty chill and I would not change much about the work culture but I would make way for more innovation to reach the higher ups so that some changes can be made more quickly to minor things without having to contact the supervisors.

*• What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching? How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

I'll be honest I haven't really faced many challenges but the one time I did, I received help and guidance to accomplish the task because the NL training did not cover how to do water tests.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

The Inservice sessions are good reminders and refreshers to new rules and old procedures that may be obscure or unfamiliar. Job satisfaction wise I don't really think it's changed too much other than a few quality-of-life things.

**16) Person Interviewed - Amelia Tang – Junior Lifeguard**

**Date and time of Interview - Feb 29 at 4pm**

**Location interviewed – Phone**

**Interview Questions with Answers**

*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

The desire to help others and to gain first-aid training skills motivated me to become a lifeguard. I feel very accomplished and delighted when I help and support others and was very interested in the first-aid training courses I took over the summer. I started swimming when I was in elementary school and every summer, I would spend time at the pool and develop my swimming skills. The pool always felt like a second home to me, and I thought that working at a pool would be a suitable environment for me. I would recommend this job to my friends and family because this job has a significant impact on others and the communities. The sense of duty and responsibility creates a meaningful influence on this position and contributes remarkably to your personal growth.

*• In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
From my perspective, work culture encompasses feeling valued, supported, and having a sense of belonging among team members. It encourages the team to collaborate, have open communication, show mutual respect, diversity, and inclusiveness among each other. If I could improve one thing about the work culture, I would hope for an improvement in team collaboration; since when the pool becomes busier, communication becomes difficult which impacts the overall organization of the team.

*• What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching?*
*How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
Some challenges I've faced during lifeguarding are communicating with patrons and staying on pace with the team. Since lifeguarding was my first job, I was slower at picking up the duties and responsibilities. However, as I gained more experience, I learned to work more efficiently and collaborate with the team.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
Inservice opportunities impacted my job experience as an employee by updating me with new information and reviewing the duties and responsibilities of a lifeguard. From the past several in-services, I learned the importance of this role and the importance of maintaining professionalism and having responsibility in my workplace.

**17) Person Interviewed - Kai Sun – Junior Lifeguard**
**Date and time of Interview - Mar 2 at 8am**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**
*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*
I wanted to become a lifeguard because I want to serve the community and give back the kindness I received from them. I want to make Richmond a water-safe community.

Second, I want a place to spread my swimming skills as a national swimmer for 13 years. I want to teach efficient, effective, and exquisite swimming skills to future lifeguards or swimmers.

• *In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*
The work culture is relaxing, laid back, and it includes diverse cultures (people from many places come to work here) in which creates this most special culture system. Not only that this culture system brings people together here in Richmond, but we as lifeguards get to share a common goal and that is to promote safety. If I were to change one thing, I would want that all lifeguards to actually go into the steam room and check on all the patrons instead of just a glance at the shades in the smoke. I have seen people who pass out in the steam room sitting upright and it is an extreme safety hazard.

• *What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching?*
*How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*
Minoru is notorious for difficult patrols and situations. Over the past month I had several cases of patrols harassing me and swear at me. However, the leaders such as Samson and Tim always have my back covered and handled the situations swiftly. So yes, I got all the support I ever needed.

• *How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*
I have not been to enough in services to have an opinion.

**18) Person Interviewed – Jamie Leung – Junior Lifeguard**
**Date and time of Interview - Mar 1 at 12pm**
**Location interviewed - Phone**
**Interview Questions with Answers**

*• What motivated you to become a lifeguard? Would you recommend this job to your friends and family?*

The flexibility and working environment. Yes, I will recommend this job.

*• In your perspective, what is the work culture like for Richmond Aquatics? If you could change one thing about the work culture in the organization, what would you change?*

The working culture is welcoming, supportive, collaborative, inclusive and challenging. If I could change one thing about the work culture, I would add a bit more rewarding components into the system.

*• What were some challenges you've faced during lifeguarding/teaching?*
*How did the leadership team assist you when you needed support?*

I found that remembering the first aid procedure would be the most challenging. I see some of the ICs would take the initiative to share their experiences and review with the team after some incidents. I hope we could do this systematically daily with the whole team.

*• How do (training opportunities - if they have done them) and/or Inservice impact your overall job satisfaction and overall experience as an employee?*

I have a good experience with the Inservice training, and it is a good overall refresher for every season.

## Appendix C

### Observations

Date and time of Observation: March 6th from 10am-12pm (General and Special Status observation)
Who/ What was observed: Lifeguards and their interactions with other lifeguards, patrons, leadership team, and user groups.
Location: Minoru Centre for Active Living
Checklist:

- There were instructors teaching adults and children swim lessons, the participants seemed to be quite active and enjoying the class.
- The parents of the children in swim lessons were observing from the sidelines.
- Many parents and children were utilizing the pool space
- A guard asked one of the children to flip the boat over
- No interaction seen between management and lifeguards
- Lifeguards were interacting with each other during rotations
- Shift supervisor and lifeguards assisting with lane rope changes and lesson equipment.
- Pool was shut down due to a fecal incident and lifeguards asked the patrons to hop out of the pool
- It was an effective teamwork in getting the pool shut down quickly and cleaning up.
- There were some guards on their phones and/or eating.
- Guards were communicating in the room and laughing or talking about their later plans, sports, or pop culture topics.

Date and time of Observation: March 7th from 6:30pm-7:30pm (General observation)
Who/ What was observed: Lifeguards and their interactions with other lifeguards, patrons, leadership team, and user groups.
Location: Minoru Centre for Active Living
Checklist:
- Instructor and parents were conversing after a swim lesson, it looked like an inquiry related to lessons and swim skills from the patron.
- The lifeguards were actively interacting with the children in swim lessons, the children looked like they were having fun.
- Rotations were effective and lifeguards rotated each other on time.
- The pool was somewhat busy with patrons utilizing the pool space.
- A lifeguard told a child to slow down when they were running on the pool deck.

- A lifeguard asked a patron to not film the patrons due to respect for other patrons and privacy issues.
- A lifeguard asked a patron to move the mats away from the lazy river.

Date and time of Observation: March 9th from 2pm-3pm (General and Special Status observation)

Who/ What was observed: Lifeguards and their interactions with other lifeguards, patrons, leadership team, and user groups.

Location: Minoru Centre for Active Living

Checklist:

- Staff came in early to work on their report cards, the staffroom was quiet due to the lifeguards being focused on writing their report cards for lessons.
- Some staff were communicating with other staff, and they were generally smiling and happy.
- Staff rotation was effective and generally on time every 15 minutes, exchange of information lasted around 30s.
- Saw some staff greet regular patrons by waving and smiling.
- Lifeguards did communicate with the Aquatic Supervisor, but the room became quiet when they entered.
- Lifeguard asked a patron to take their shoes off prior to entering the pool space, it was a respectful request.
- The pool was busy and there were lots of patrons, some lifeguards were a bit tense due to the influx of patrons.

## Appendix D

### Content Analysis

The documents were requested from Julie Kaufman and were sent through email as PDFs. The documents were accessed on March 4th, 2024. Below were the documents that were requested to aid in the research:

- Instructor Lifeguard Orientation Manual

- Aquatics FAQ

- Aquatics Instructor Lifeguard – Orientation Checklist

- Aquatics Facility Orientation Leson Material

- Ripple Effects Presentation