



FIND, START, STAY CHANGING BOATHOUSE CULTURE

OUR BOATHOUSES AND TEAMS



"The world is not going to change unless we change ourselves."

-Rigoberta Menchú Tum

BOATHOUSE CULTURE

WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT BOATHOUSE CULTURE?

DO WE NEED TO CHANGE IT?

The short answer is yes! The sport of rowing is a historically exclusive environment and culture, there is no way around that. People who come from populations that were historically barred from accessing the sport (most often BIPOC, individuals from low-income backgrounds, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community) often still come up against walls built by history despite an organization's want and willingness to welcome them. In order to create an environment and culture that is truly open there is a need to make a cultural shift as a community rather than relying on verbalized or written intentions, specific individuals, or small group of "champions" of diversity and inclusion.

WHAT ARE SOME ELEMENTS THAT MAKE UP CULTURE?

- internal, unvoiced, and unwritten values
- published and expressed values
- underlying assumptions
- social rules
- decision making
- boathouse hierarchy
- status symbols/markers
- stories or "legends"
- speech/words/terms
- behavior/body language
- produced materials (flyers, handouts, waivers)
- traditions
- chosen objects (physical artifacts that are assigned value)
- clothing
- team gear
- training gear
- workout music

ANYTHING THAT AFFECTS HOW PEOPLE SPEAK, ACT, OR FEEL IN YOUR SPACE IS PART OF YOUR CULTURE



WHEN AND WHERE DOES CULTURE HAPPEN?

Every day. During boathouse operations, during interpersonal interactions, in the way people perceive the boathouse, in the photos on your walls or website, in the messages athletes absorb and take home. It can happen in the physical boathouse, online, on the water, and in the actions of the boathouse members while away from the physical boathouse.



WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Even at our best, we can still be better. We will never know everything, or always be doing things the "right" way. But that shouldn't stop us from trying.

WHO MAKES CULTURE?

Staff, coaches, athletes, parents, supporters, board members...anyone stepping into the boathouse is part of the culture.



BUT WHAT ABOUT TRADITION?

Traditions in rowing are part of the attraction of the sport, and there is room to keep them. But that doesn't mean that they can't be reexamined and adjusted to fit the needs of your community.



BUILDING CULTURE CHANGES

- Cultural change is a top down and bottom up action.
 - Everyone has to participate to make it happen.
- Maintain a learning mentality.
 - Mistakes will happen. It is important to acknowledge, apologize, and learn.
- Recognize biases.
 - We all have different backgrounds, and our different stories mean we have different unconscious habits/perspectives/processes and different learned habits/perspectives/processes. Know your own bias lenses (ex. health, wealth, education, gender identity, sexuality, appearance, athleticism, etc.) when tackling problems or participating in conversations.
- Stay person-centered.
 - We can take all the cultural competency, trauma, diversity, inclusion, and equity training in the world...but in the end no one will ever be an expert on another person's experience. Ask the people you want to include to help guide you toward what they need to feel included.



EQUALITY ≠ EQUITY

Take a look at the image above.

If you aren't quite sure what you're looking at, no worries!

The distinction between the two words is that equality provides everyone with the same bike, even though they have different needs. On the other hand equity takes into account the different needs of the people and provides them with a bike that meets their needs and makes it possible for all of them to participate.

The same concept applies in boathouses: we can provide everyone with equal access, but some people are going to have different needs that may affect them before they can even utilize that access to the boathouse. Keeping this in mind when creating or changing boathouse culture is important.

THREE C'S

1

CONSTANT

Culture is created by habits and repeated actions, set standards and expectations and then stick to them.

2

CLEAR

Everyone in your community should know exactly what kind of culture you have.

3

COLLABORATIVE

Accept and reflect on any criticism, fears, suggestions, or problems brought to you by your team and your community.

Training, Education, and Ideas

PLACES TO LOOK FOR CULTURAL COMPETENCY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION TRAINING

- Community partners with a large network outside of the rowing world.
- Programming offered by community partners with established DEI curriculum.
- Trainings with local cities, universities, and school districts (equity and diversity conferences are often open to the public).
- Education based conferences. These often include OST (Outside of School Time) focused sessions and these are applicable to boathouses and sports teams.
- Your local transportation association's public forums.

TIPS

- If cost is an issue ask if there are discounts for nonprofits.
- Send different staff members, coaches, or board members to each training.
- Take notes, take the handouts, communicate and connect with the speaker or organizer after the session/conference is over.
- Make connections, make friends.
- Invite other attendees to the boathouse.



TRANSLATION

Language barriers block out families.

- Make the effort to get documentation in other languages.
- Have a list of local translators and interpreters on hand. Never rely on a youth athlete to be the primary translator, this is unfair to them and to their family.
- Always pay for your translation. This is a marketable skill and job, not a pastime. If someone in your community is willing and able to donate their time and energy to provide translation for free...THANK THEM!
- Documents that should be in a language other than English:
 - Waivers
 - Photo releases
 - Important boathouse information
 - Parent handbook
- Universities, local advocates or groups for the communities you want to include, translation services employed by your school district, city, and/or parks department are all good resources when searching for translators or interpreters.

CONTACT

We are always happy to add to our resources and value your input.

Please get in touch with our Community Partnerships Manager to make a recommendation.

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