

School sports can provide a memorable way to improve physical literacy



Competitors in the NWT Cross-Country Championships in Fort Providence in October 2024 take off from the start line. Photo courtesy of Thorsten Gohl

As the winter season unfolds, there's so much to appreciate about physical literacy. I hope you've gained some insights, learned a few things, and perhaps even enjoyed a few snowball fights! The warmer temperatures certainly make it easier to stay active outdoors.

School sports have long been a cornerstone of life in the Northwest Territories, contributing to the development of many multi-sport athletes. From basketball and volleyball to soccer, table tennis, tennis, squash, and badminton, students engage in a variety of tournaments that teach them invaluable lessons about teamwork, training, and preparation.

For many, participating in these events means travelling from small communities, fundraising, finding chaperones, and sometimes even sleeping in hotels or schools. This experience not only promotes physical activity but also fosters personal growth and resilience.

For years, teachers have been the backbone of these events, dedicating their time and energy to create a vibrant sports culture. They've taken on the monumental task of organizing

tournaments, training students, forming teams, finding officials, and ensuring that every detail is attended to. Their commitment to enriching the experiences of students across our territory is nothing short of amazing.

Since the spring of 2024, we've seen the establishment of a formal territorial sport organization (TSO) that supports teachers, TSOs and schools in organizing these events. It's called NWT School Sports and Andrew Gilmour, the executive director, has spent the past year immersed in the world of school sports, helping with scheduling, disseminating information, advertising, and coordinating medals and trophies. His support has been invaluable, and the teachers continue to work their magic alongside him.

So, how can you get involved? It's easier than

you might think. If you're a teacher, student, or staff member at a school and have a passion for a particular sport, consider empowering others. Set up training sessions, consult with your school administration about upcoming tournaments, and brainstorm fundraising ideas like bake sales, snow shovelling, or car washes. Engage with your community to garner support for your initiatives, and reach out to the TSOs for guidance on running training sessions and achieving success.

Don't forget to connect with your local recreation co-ordinator to find out about open gym times, and consider reaching out to organizations like Kidsport NWT, Indigenous Sports Circle NWT or the Mackenzie Recreation Association for assistance with equipment. Additionally, seek out community members, such as RCMP officers, teachers,

nurses, or doctors, who may have skills to share and can support your endeavours.

As the big day approaches, excitement and nerves may run high, especially if you're leaving your community for the first time. Rest assured - there are many people ready to help you along the way. If you forget your equipment, don't panic. We'll find a way to make it work. Embrace the journey, soak in the experiences of the tournament, and bring those stories back to your community. You'll become a storyteller and a role model, inspiring others and making your community proud.

And if you happen to see a big guy with a camera running around, don't hesitate to say hello and smile for a picture, that's me! (Editor's note: James McCarthy is also a big guy with a camera running around as well). I look forward to seeing you at the next school sports tournament, where we'll celebrate the spirit of competition, community, and physical literacy together. Let's make it unforgettable!

Thorsten Gohl is the co-ordinator of Physical Literacy NWT.



GUEST COMMENT

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LKFN calls for 'direct meeting' with Aurora College following decision to close learning centres

'Our people deserve better,' says Chief Kele Antoine

Tom Taylor, Local Journalism Initiative
Northern News Services

Liidlii Kue First Nation (LKFN) Chief Kele Antoine is demanding a meeting with Aurora College's board of governors after the post-secondary institution revealed plans to shutter its 19 community learning centres around the territory as of June 30.

"We do not accept the reasons for this decision," Antoine stated in a Feb. 5 news release. "Removing access to local learning opportunities only deepens the barriers our people face in pursuing education and employment. Aurora College and the Gov-

ernment of the Northwest Territories must work with Indigenous people to find real solutions that prioritize community-based learning and not take it away. Our people deserve better."

The release contended that the closure of the centres — specifically the one in Fort Simpson — marks "a significant setback, considering our already low high school graduation rates due to insufficient investment in education." It also stated that "education is a treaty right," and that Aurora College's decision to close its learning centres was made without "free, prior or informed consent" from LKFN.

It is for that reason that the First Nation called for a "direct meeting" with the college's board of governors.

Other Indigenous leaders, including Dene National Chief George Mackenzie, have also expressed disappointment about the closure of Aurora College's community learning centres.

LKFN's Feb. 5 news release also emphasized the importance of the "Dene-led solutions."

"Liidlii Kue First Nation First Nation wants to work together in a true Dene fashion to find an honorable pathway forward," it concluded.



Chief Kele Antoine of Liidlii Kue First Nation in Fort Simpson is demanding a meeting with Aurora College decision-makers, after the pending closure of 19 community learning centres around the territory, including Fort Simpson, as of June 30. NNSL file photo