



K'alemi Dene School's cross-country team was at the NWT Cross-Country Championships in Fort Providence in October 2024. When kids are welcomed into an environment where they can move, explore, and express themselves without judgment, that's where the magic starts, writes columnist Thorsten Gohl. Photo courtesy of Thorsten Gohl



# IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN!

As spring arrives so do the frost heaves and potholes.  
Please be sure to drive slowly and with care!



NWT Association of Communities

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Resilience. It's a big word for a small but mighty superpower. The ability to bounce back, to grow from setbacks, to smile even when it hurts, and to keep moving forward no matter what life throws our way.

Now imagine a world where every child, every adult, every community member could carry that superpower. The good news? We already have one of the most powerful tools to build it: sports & recreation.

**Facing challenges and growing from them**

In sports, losing isn't the opposite of winning, it's part of learning. Whether it's missing a shot, dropping the ball, slipping on the ice, or finishing second (or last), athletes learn that every setback can be an invitation to rise stronger. But in many small communities, that's not always what happens. Too often, youth give up not because they lack talent, but because they lack support. They don't always have someone on the sidelines cheering them on or picking them up after a tough game.

That's why a support system matters. They need to know someone believes in them - really believes. Because when they do, amazing things happen. I've seen kids walk into their first training session unsure and walk out with their heads held high. I've seen youth face tough losses and, with encouragement, come back more focused, more determined, and more confident. That's the beauty of sport - it teaches us that failure isn't the end of the story, it's just one step in the process. And when we surround our young people with support, belief, and opportunity, we help build the very essence of resilience.

When I think back to some of the stories we've shared through our column over the past year - kids lacing up skates for the very first time, a young badminton player serving past their nerves or a youth proudly finishing a Dene games challenge with tears in their eyes - I see resilience in motion. These aren't just moments of sport, they're moments of

growth, courage, and confidence. Whether it's holding a snow snake for the first time or standing at the start line of a race, these experiences shape who we are and who we become. Resilience doesn't always look like winning, it looks like showing up, trying again, and believing that each step forward matters.

**Setting goals, one step at a time**

Most young athletes start with a dream. They imagine the big win, the shiny medal, the roaring crowd. But in many Northern communities, it's not always about structured training or early mornings. It begins with feeling safe, supported, and seen.

When kids are welcomed into an environment where they can move, explore, and express themselves without judgment, that's where the magic starts. A place where trying matters more than winning. Where showing up is celebrated. Where fun is part of the process, not separate from the purpose. Because behind every athlete, whether they attend one session or return again and again, is a whole team of people who believe in them: the coach who offers a high five, the Elder who shares wisdom, those that cheer from the stands, the friend who passes the ball.

That's what #weareallteamnt is all about - knowing that it takes a village to create opportunities, and that everyone has a role in building confidence and resilience.

Resilience doesn't grow in isolation. It grows in safe places where kids can take small steps, stumble a little, and still be met with encouragement and care. And when someone is ready to go further, to set goals, train harder, or chase a dream, it's that same network of support that helps carry them forward. That's the power of sport. That's the heart of a whole team.

In part two, we'll explore how resilience is built through teamwork, mental toughness, and life beyond the game.

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



**GUEST COMMENT**

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