

Movement, meaning, and the magic of showing up



Olympian Liam Gill paid a visit to Harry Camsell School earlier this month to talk to students. Photo courtesy of Thorsten Gohl

Northern News Services

On a bright June day in Fort Providence, something powerful happened, not with banners or speeches, but with smiles, swings, and

shared stories. Team Canada Olympian Liam Gill came to the Northwest Territories not just as a snowboarder, but as a young Indigenous role model walking with purpose. His visit, supported by the

Canadian Olympic Committee and coordinated through local partnerships, was rooted in celebrating Olympic Day. But what unfolded reached far deeper: a living example of physical literacy

in motion. **Beyond sport: movement as connection** Physical literacy is often defined by skills, running, jumping, balancing, but in the North, it means more

than that. It’s how we greet the day, how we build confidence, how we find our place in the community. Liam’s presence brought that to life.

He joined kids in school gyms and recess playgrounds. He arm-wrestled students, presented his story to the students, tossed a table tennis ball, and listened. Really listened.

Cpl. Kevin Devoe, currently the detachment commander of Fort Providence RCMP, captured it beautifully, after a visit with Liam: “Reconciliation isn’t about big events. It’s about listening, being present, and inspiring even one person. That’s the key.”

Representation matters Seeing Liam, a proud Indigenous Olympian, walk into a place like Deh Gah School matters. His story, his laughter, his humility - they all became mirrors for youth to see their own greatness reflected back.

Liam’s journey didn’t begin with his visit this year to celebrate Olympic Day. For three years, he’s returned to the North to teach snowboarding in communities like Yellowknife, Fort Smith, and Fort Simpson. He does it because he loves the sport, because he cares, and

because he remembers what it meant to be a kid with big dreams. When his grandmother mentioned there was a snowboard hill in Fort Simpson, Liam came North

to ride that hill with the youth. Not for cameras, not for glory, but for connection.

In Kakisa, the principal was moved to order snowboards for next winter. In Fort Providence, youth now talk about using their local hill for snowboarding. These are not side notes, they are the legacy of presence.

Movement is a language

From Hay River to Fort Providence to Kakisa, Liam’s journey reminded us that movement is a language. It speaks when words cannot. Whether on the land, on a snowboard, or holding hands in a circle, movement tells stories of identity, healing, and possibility.

To Liam, thank you for showing up with heart. For swinging with our youth. For standing in front of the monument to children lost in residential schools. For choosing to listen. For reminding us that one visit, one shared moment, can spark hope.

This is what physical literacy looks like in the North.



GUEST COMMENT

Thorsten Gohl is the co-ordinator of Physical Literacy NWT

A wide-angle aerial photograph of Yellowknife, showing the city's layout, buildings, and surrounding landscape.

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