



Sharing Our Story

Developing Recreation Leadership Training
In the North - for the North - by the North

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The Recreation North partnership



Endorsed by



Winner of the 2015

ARCTIC
INSPIRATION PRIZE



PRIX INSPIRATION
ARCTIQUE

Welcome... this is the story of our journey to develop and deliver a meaningful and relevant Training Program across Canada's North—across Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

We know that recreation touches many aspects of our lives. It helps people grow and be healthy; builds strong families and communities; provides opportunities for those who are disadvantaged; protects the environment; stimulates the economy; and adds overall to the quality of life in our communities.

We recognize that community recreation requires capacity at the local level. Capacity requires competent leaders who have the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to lead, manage and volunteer.

We set out on this journey to strengthen the capacity of recreation leaders in Northern, rural, and remote communities through the delivery of a sustainable training program. Our story shares where we began and why, who was part of it, where we got to, and what we learned along the way.

This is the beginning of a journey that we believe will empower people and communities to collectively enhance individual, community, and environmental wellbeing.

Kwänäschis, thank you,

Caroline Sparks

Whitehorse, Yukon on the traditional territory of
Kwanlin Dun First Nation and Ta-an Kwach'an Council



The 2015 Arctic Inspiration Prize Award Ceremony

Where the Journey Began ...

PURPOSE

Beginning with conversations at the 2011 National Recreation Summit, it became clear that a sustainable leadership training program could strengthen recreation capacity in the North. During this event, attendees from across the country reviewed and discussed current issues within the field of recreation. Some of these issues were presented in commissioned papers. One such paper, *Building Community: Recreation Development Challenges for Isolated Communities* by Caroline Sparks, identified the benefits of recreation and sport in addressing community health and wellbeing. However, the complexity of geographic, social and economic challenges isolated communities face, shed light on the importance of building better recreation capacity and leadership in these communities.

A common challenge in Northern, rural and remote communities is to find and retain knowledgeable leaders who will offer programming and encourage community participation in recreation. Nationally and across the North, strengthening recreation leadership emerged as a stated priority and a means of addressing this challenge. Competent recreation leaders contribute to the capacity that empowers people and communities to collectively enhance individual, community, and environmental wellbeing through recreation.

PARTNERSHIPS

Several years later, a group representing Northern recreation leaders, territorial governments, and not-for-profit associations came together to address this challenge. A core group of five individuals formed to lead the TRT Project which would provide flexible training options to the North's communities. The team comprised executive directors from each of the territorial recreation and parks associations and two consultants.

The Arctic Inspiration Prize was identified as an opportunity to support the training program. One of Yukon's well-known Olympic athletes, Zach Bell, nominated the TRT Project for the 2015 Arctic Inspiration Prize. In January 2016, the TRT team was awarded \$600,000 to develop, pilot and evaluate a unique and sustainable recreation leadership training program for the North.

Recreation North, a partnership of the three, territorial recreation and parks associations, emerged from these early relationships. The Recreation North Training Program is delivered through this partnership, endorsed by the territorial governments, and initially supported by the Arctic Inspiration Prize.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Recreation North Training Program offers sustainable and relevant learning opportunities and strengthens recreation leadership and capacity across the North.

Upon winning the Arctic Inspiration Prize, the Tri-Territorial Recreation Training (TRT) team assembled a Program Advisory Group; set up a financial management system; and contracted key consultants. The Program Advisory Group, representative of community, not-for-profit and government sectors, contributed to the frameworks from which the training program and partnership would evolve.

Development of the Training Program required curriculum design, testing and evaluation. Curriculum design was based on a matrix of 13 foundational competencies for leading in community recreation created by the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon (RPAY). A Training Team was established to deliver the training. From October 2017 to May 2018, the Pilot tested a series of learning events and appropriate tools and technology for remote delivery. Evaluation explored the extent to which the Training Program was able to remotely strengthen competencies for recreation leadership through the practical application of knowledge and skills within a community context.

PEOPLE

Consultants managed the project and provided expertise in key areas. Caroline Sparks (Yukon) was responsible for project development and management, strategic planning and evaluation, curriculum design, delivering training and supporting other trainers, as well as administration and promotion. Brenda Herchmer (Ontario) was responsible for project development, curriculum and learning event design, and training team development. Sylvia Riessner (BC) provided expertise related to technology, facilitating learning online, and evaluation. Flo Frank (Sask/BC) took the lead on strategic planning and evaluation. The Training Team of Jodi Alderson and Kimberley Masson (Nunavut), Wendy Lahey and Susan Keats (NWT), Mia Lee and Cindy Underhill (Yukon) were supported by Master Trainers Caroline and Brenda, by Sylvia, and by Greg Henhawk (Six Nations, Ontario). Greg helped the team understand and apply Indigenous perspectives to learning.

The Training Program was intended for staff and volunteer leaders who served as recreation coordinators and directors, youth leaders, board members, coaches, fitness leaders, camp counsellors, and after school leaders. Remote delivery would make it possible for these individuals to participate in training without leaving their families or workplaces. Learning activities targeted key competencies relevant to the work and volunteer roles of Northerners.

Timeline

2011

- 2011 National Recreation Summit highlighted recreation leadership and capacity challenges.
- Prompted ongoing discussion about how to address these challenges across the North.

2015

- Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 (priority 5.4) stated the need for training and capacity development in rural and remote areas.
- The Tri-Territorial Recreation Training (TRT) initiative was established.
- TRT Project was nominated for the 2015 Arctic Inspiration Prize.

2016

- TRT Team won the 2015 Arctic Inspiration Prize for \$600,000.
- TRT Team engaged representatives from community, not-for-profit and government sectors in planning to develop and test the Training Program.
- Partnership of the three territorial recreation and parks associations was formalized and re-branded as Recreation North.

2017

- Strategic Plan included goals for a Training Program, Pilot and partnership.
- Comprehensive process to develop, test and evaluate training curriculum was prepared and implemented.
- Training Team was established and supported.
- Pilot and evaluation ran from fall 2017 to spring 2018.

2018

- 24 individuals from three territories took part in 17 learning events.
- Evaluation resulted in useful findings and recommendations presented in the Remote Delivery Evaluation Report and the Pilot Evaluation Report.
- Partners updated the Strategic Plan and committed to the Training Program.
- Curriculum updated for launch of the Recreation North Training Program.



*Drumdancing Sedna by Adamie Anautak from Akulivik,
Nunavik presented to TRT Team by Arctic Inspiration Prize*

Developing and Testing a Training Program

Designing a meaningful and relevant, Northern, and community-based training program for a diverse group of new and emerging recreation leaders required significant collaboration, support and time. Preparation began with a set of 13 foundational competencies for leading in community recreation, led to the development of training delivered remotely through short learning events, and ended with a substantial evaluation report with findings and recommendations for moving from a Pilot into a full Training Program. During the process of designing, testing and evaluating, a set of principles or pillars were emerged giving shape and direction to program design and ongoing delivery.

Competency-Based Curriculum

The Recreation North Training Program was built upon a matrix of 13 foundational competencies relevant for leading in community recreation. Developed by the Recreation and Parks Association of the Yukon (RPAY) as part of the Yukon Community Recreation Leaders Guide,¹ the matrix included key performance indicators, learning objectives and proposed learning events. The key performance indicators identified the range of attitudes, knowledge and skill comprising each of the foundational competencies.

The Program was designed to strengthen competencies through learning objectives facilitated in a series of 5-hour, micro-learning events/mini-courses. These short learning events were delivered remotely using an online space and conference calls. Each learning event was delivered by a Northern Trainer. A flexible model offered diverse participants accessible, community-based learning that accommodated the Northern realities of home and work.

Completed curriculum resources included training guides and materials for delivery. The curriculum was presented using plain, inclusive language and, wherever possible, alternative media was used to support learning (to minimize the emphasis on reading and writing). Additional resources included a Program Handbook to guide future training delivery with draft policies and procedures and a Program Overview document with the curriculum framework, examples from piloted learning events, acknowledgements, and recommended learning event revisions.

Pillars

Accompanying the curriculum, three pillars were identified as essential to all aspects of program design, development, testing, and delivery.

¹ This work was done in partnership with, and funded by, Yukon Government Sport and Recreation Branch.

These pillars embodied philosophical approaches that guided consultants and trainers. These pillars encompassed strategies and guidelines to ensure that the training program and learning experiences were:

1. Inclusive of emerging, diverse, Northern, and Indigenous learners.
2. Grounded in practices of community building with recreation content that was meaningful, relevant, and connected to national priorities.
3. Accessible across the North through remote delivery and the use of tools appropriate to the availability of technology and bandwidth.



*Working hard developing the partnership and planning a training program
(May 2017)*

Every effort was made to “start from where the learner was at”, building knowledge and competency in a meaningful way with an emphasis on how it would apply to the local community context.

Technology

Delivery of remote training required technology that would work in remote communities across the North. Moodle, an open source learning management system, was chosen to provide a Learning Space and a Trainers Space at <http://learn.recnorth.ca>. WordPress, selected for the <http://recnorth.ca> public platform, Facebook and Twitter were set up to share information about the upcoming training opportunity. These online platforms would also provide learner enrolment, online learning spaces, and a stable, accessible location to store and maintain training resources.

The Project Coordinator and two experts developed the Learning Space, ensuring consistency in design, layout and branding. A Trainers Space incorporated resources and forums to foster an understanding of the program and build online facilitation skills. A 4-week online workshop helped the Training Team practice their online facilitation skills use of cloud-based tools.

Training Team

Program testing during the Pilot used a train-the-trainer model. Two Master Trainers worked with a team of six, Northern Trainers—two from each territory. The team represented a broad range of experience and knowledge; however, most had never taught online. Development of the Training Team involved a

Facilitating Learning Online (FLO) workshop² as well as online and one in-person planning meetings and discussions.

The Training Team determined their own responsibility for Pilot delivery assigning each learning event to one of the six trainers or Yukon Master Trainer. Trainers collaborated with an assigned Master Trainer and a technical consultant to prepare and facilitate their assigned learning event(s). Trainers met monthly to review progress and identify ways to improve learning experiences and outcomes.

Trainers made every effort to model inclusive facilitation practices, both in-person and online. Participants were encouraged to contribute their perspectives or community experiences to the learning events. Alternative ways to complete assignments or activities were possible during each learning event. The Indigenous perspectives consultant coached Trainers before and after the delivery of learning events.

The Pilot

The Pilot was an opportunity to test and evaluate the curriculum in order to inform ongoing delivery of the Training Program. In total, 18 learning events were developed and 17 were piloted.

Preparation for the Pilot required basic communication, promotion and administrative processes. A comprehensive Communications Plan and social media channels were developed to promote the Pilot. Administrative and operational tools (e.g., evaluation instruments, draft agreements, work plans for key staff, contract templates, Communications Plan, financial forms and reports, etc.) were prepared.

By September 2017, the Pilot cohort had been selected with 24 registered from 21 communities. Individuals who registered did not pay a fee but agreed to participate in 10 or more learning events and contribute to the evaluation. The cohort had access to a Learning Guide and were oriented briefly to the Pilot training process and online Learning Space.

Remote learning events were delivered in two-week intervals from October 2017 to May 2018. Although some learning events were delivered in-person, the emphasis was on remote delivery as this was a test of curriculum and technology. In total, 16 learning events were delivered. Individuals who completed eight required and two elective learning events received a Certificate in Northern Recreation Leadership. Ten certificates were awarded, with others receiving credit for their completed learning events and option to complete their certificate in the future.

² FLO North was adapted and delivered for this project by Sylvia Riessner from a BC Campus open-licence.

During the Pilot, the coordinator and trainers responded to learner needs by establishing local, remote and timely support and coaching. Notable successes were due to the proactive approach of the Project Manager who responded quickly when a trainer was unable to provide the additional assistance a learner needed. Responses included follow-up assistance with technology, with understanding tasks within learning events, with scheduling time for learning, and helping those who had lost track of what they needed to do to successfully complete learning events. In a few cases, when learners continued to struggle, local level supports were identified and provided as needed. Every effort was made to understand the opportunities and challenges of a remote, community-recreation, leadership training program.

Evaluation

A developmental evaluation approach was selected and a comprehensive and inclusive Evaluation Matrix and quantitative and qualitative evaluation tools were prepared.

Data collection tools were tested and finalized before the end of 2017. The tools were used to collect data in several ways:

- a) from trainers before and after each learning event that they delivered;
- b) from learners immediately after each event they completed;
- c) from Master Trainers, on occasion, regarding the process, development, and delivery of learning events; and,
- d) during a broad spectrum telephone sampling of learners' experiences at mid-point in the Pilot delivery.

The Evaluation Team also periodically analyzed feedback about the learning content, the trainers, and the remote delivery, and used it to improve the remaining training development and delivery.

Regular reporting informed strategic planning. Major reports included a Remote Delivery Evaluation Report, the Pilot Evaluation Report, and Moving Forward—a document to guide future program implementation. Indigenous perspectives on the Pilot and Program were gathered through an independent curriculum review by an advisory team of indigenous educators and leaders, and a report prepared by the Indigenous perspectives consultant. The core partners reviewed reports, consulted with relevant supporters, revised the Strategic Plan, and renewed their commitment to continue with the Recreation North Training Program.



The Training Team

Reflecting on What We Learned

PURPOSE

We set out to strengthen the capacity of recreation leaders in Northern, rural, and remote communities through the delivery of a sustainable training program.

We learned that:

- An innovative training program must be capable of supporting remote, local and in-person learning options. The key is to introduce remote learning and to integrate appropriate technologies that ensure learning opportunities are accessible in all Northern communities.
- Strengthening capacity is not only about training. The Pilot connected recreation leaders across the North, from east to west. These networks built a foundation for learning and for ongoing access to the support that recreation leaders in small communities often need.
- It takes a long time to evaluate outcomes of an innovative, community-based initiative. Evaluation is critical to the success of the Training Program. Developmental evaluation is the process of continually learning and revising the curriculum.

PARTNERSHIPS

Recreation North is a partnership of three territorial recreation and parks associations endorsed by territorial governments. Development of the Training Program was made possible by the Arctic Inspiration Prize.

We learned that:

- Effective collaboration spanning 3 territories and reflecting not-for-profit, government and community priorities requires time, dedication, innovation, resources, etc. Relationship building and partnership development are critical for future impact and sustainability.
- Working together must begin with values, passion and a long-term vision. When differences occur, it is important to take the time to come back to these foundations, reaffirm the commitment, and work towards consensus.

- Strategic and operational plans provided direction for the partnership related to governance, sustainability, the Training Program, operations, financial management, communications, etc. These activities were not part of the nomination to the Arctic Inspiration Prize, yet without these, the work to design, test and evaluate a community recreation leadership program would not have been successful.



Recreation North Leadership Team, Program Advisory Group and Training Team

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The Recreation North Training Program, delivered through a series of remote, micro learning events, is built upon a matrix of 13 foundational competencies for leading in community recreation. Respectful of diverse learners and Indigenous cultures, the Program integrates learning that connects to local recreation and aligns with national priorities.

We learned that:

- Being inclusive of a range of learning and teaching styles and Indigenous perspectives, and being grounded in priorities of the Framework for Recreation in Canada is essential.
- Remote delivery is innovative and sustainable and should remain central to the Recreation North Training Program.
- Learner-centred, interactive delivery approaches (e.g. stories, local examples, networking) engage participants and foster ongoing networking.
- Simultaneously developing and testing a training program, in less than 12 months and over three territories, was challenging—doable but challenging.
- Recreation North Trainers are most effective when they understand the broad field of community recreation from national to local levels as well as the uniqueness of

small, isolated Northern communities. Finding trainers who have this understanding and some experience of online facilitation can be difficult.

- Some individuals may seek training credits that connect to national or higher education programs. This connection requires thoughtful consideration to ensure the focus on relevant and meaningful training for Northern communities is maintained.
- It can be difficult to reduce reliance on government funding. Financial sustainability for ongoing delivery through reasonable fees and other revenue sources takes time and expertise yet needs to be a priority from the beginning.

PEOPLE

We set out to develop a training program that targeted new and emerging recreation leaders across the North. To do this, we involved a number of experts and a team of six trainers (two from each territory). Training was intended to be of individual benefit, as well as to be of benefit to workplace (if applicable) and community.

We learned that:

- The Pilot training resulted in meaningful learning with most participants stating the Pilot met or exceeded their expectations. Employers and participants commented on the useful and practical content that allowed immediate application of learning.
- The learning design allowed for multiple means of engagement and sharing (to minimize dominance of one style or culture/language/perspective). However, diversity of participants and the short timeframe for each learning event created unique challenges in terms of maintaining focus and participation in learning. With appropriate scaffolding and facilitation by experienced trainers, individuals with less experience or who face cultural or educational challenges, can successfully gain recreation leadership knowledge and skills through remote delivery.
- Many individuals were new to online learning. Bandwidth or other technological constraints were sometimes barriers to participation in synchronous events or frustrated learners as they navigated resources online. However, the Pilot introduced these individuals to online learning and developed important digital literacies that would be transferable to other online learning opportunities.
- People who enroll in remote learning are often very busy and dealing with competing demands for their time and attention from home, community, work, etc. Likewise, many individuals working in recreation roles are often pulled away from learning by the demands of these roles.

In Their Words

"The great thing about this program for me was how much flexibility there was in completing the courses. It has been so instrumental to the work I am doing in my community." Rob McPhie (YT)

"The program is flexible and works around people's schedules and is online in blocks. This is really good – you can work around busy schedules and complete certification at a reasonable pace in a reasonable way." Jason Tologanak (NU)

"My employee gained confidence and was better able to program. He was able to apply what was learned instantaneously and I see him do it on a daily basis." CAO Kathy Clark (YT)

"It is great to be connected to such a large community of people involved in recreation so we can share ideas, wins, and help support each other when we get frustrated or burned out." Kelsey Hassard (YT)

"What really helped was to hear and read other ideas from the different communities and recreation leaders who were participating in the program." Deian Cassie (NT)

"I gained more knowledge through this program and learned how to coordinate things better." Stephanie Cardinal-Clark (NT)

"The Learning Events on program planning, marketing, and risk management were particularly useful to me as our staff were preparing to start a second Elder's Day Program and a Foot Care Program, and are developing fitness and falls prevention programs for Elders in the Tlicho region." Laurel Irving (NT)

"Sometimes community life can make it difficult to participate in training, but with Recreation North, help was just a phone call or email away." Florence Pilon (YT)

"It was a marathon of informative, relevant, and practical learning which gave me a better



Receiving a Certificate in Northern Recreation Leadership (Nyasha)

understanding of how the Northern recreation system works. The courses were tailored for the North and covered every important aspect including planning, finances, leadership strengths, getting to know your community, promotion of programs/events, proposal writing, and managing risk in remote situations."

Nyasha Kamera (NU)

Looking Forward

After developing and piloting training for Northern recreation leaders; Recreation North, a 2015 Arctic Inspiration Prize laureate, launched its Training Program in November 2018. Building on a successful Pilot, the Training Program is now available to any individual residing in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut. Learning events are offered online in 2-week time frames. During these two weeks, individuals have the opportunity to discuss content on conference calls and in online discussion forums.

From participating in the Pilot, Nayasha Kamera (NU) noted in his experience that he “learnt the most from the conference calls and written exercises where we shared insights with fellow students of what was going on in our different communities. A lot of brilliant ideas and creativity was shared; most of our experiences were very similar even though we came from three different territories”.

With the online structure, individuals can select learning events they are interested in for professional development purposes or to work towards a Certificate in Northern Recreation Leadership. Learning events currently offered are listed on the Recreation North website at www.recnorth.ca.

Pravina Bartlett (NWT) noted the ease in taking online learning events while working full-time. “The online structure was very beneficial to my work schedule and easy to maneuver through.”

A Northern Youth Recreation Leaders Certificate, under development, will prepare youth for entry and assistant leader roles in community recreation. Based on the competency model used by the Recreation North Training Program, this certificate will be recognized in Nunavut, NWT and Yukon. The training will be offered in-person, by a local trainer who helps young people to:

- Develop essential knowledge and skills for working in the recreation field.
- Gain experience and build their confidence as a recreation leader.
- Become certified to improve their employment opportunities.
- Make a difference in their communities.

Stay tuned for future plans to offer a Certificate for Northern Recreation Volunteers.





For More Information

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