

## SPORTS AND RECREATION IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

**Recreation is an integral part of  
Aboriginal culture and is based on a  
holistic framework.**

Within a holistic framework, Aboriginal communities depend on building connections, relationships and trust. Through recreation, Aboriginal children and youth **gain a sense of belonging, identity, mastery, generosity** and an **understanding of their relationship to others**, the community and their nation.

Recreation provides an engaging, interactive and interesting environment to teach cultural values, protocol, history and traditional teachings, while promoting skill development, healthy living, and community healing.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples further describes how recreation based on a holistic approach can contribute to healing, building leadership and empowerment for children and youth.

*"Participation enhances physical development and increases awareness of fitness and nutrition. But when youth also operate the programs, a momentum seems to build, tapping into their energy and creativity. They develop leadership skills, as well as communication, fund-raising and organizing skills they can apply to their personal and community endeavours in other areas besides recreation"* (Royal Commission)

Traditionally sport was often used as a tool for trading, solving disputes, and entertainment. Throughout North America Aboriginal communities participated in various traditional sports, games of chance and other activities that enhance motor development.

*The most important aspect of  
sport, leisure and recreation is  
the opportunity for celebration  
and social gatherings.*

### Did you know?

The North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) was first held in 1990 and include sport competitions, as well as song and dance exhibitions. The NAIG are a "celebration of the cultures of Aboriginal peoples" (Aboriginal Sport Circle)

Also, June 21 has been declared National Aboriginal Day in Canada. Many Aboriginal communities host and participate in cultural, informational and recreational events celebrating Aboriginal peoples, their contributions and their diverse cultures often through contemporary and traditional dance, song and theatrical performances.



# Sport and Recreation in Aboriginal Communities

## RESOURCE SUPPLEMENT

### RESOURCES

For More Information on Aboriginal culture, recreation activities and advocacy, contact:

An Aboriginal Friendship Centre in your community;

Community (Band/First Nation), Reception/Administrator;

Area Treaty Office;

BC Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation;  
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada  
[www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/)

Aboriginal Canada Portal  
[www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en/index.html](http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/site.nsf/en/index.html)

Aboriginal Youth Network  
[www.ayn.ca](http://www.ayn.ca)

Associate Child and Youth Officer,  
Preston Guno  
Email: [Preston.Guno@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Preston.Guno@gov.bc.ca);

Urban Native Youth Association  
Tel: 604-254-7732;

Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association  
Tel: 604-254-5513;

Warriors Against Violence Society (Youth Program)  
Tel: 604-254-1333; or

Any other Aboriginal Youth Advocacy and/or Recreation program in your province, region or community.

Book Resources on Aboriginal Activities, Games and Sport

Handbook of American Indian Games  
by Allan and Paulette Macfarlan;

Ancient Pathways, New Directions  
by Thom Henley

This Information has been adapted from:

Aboriginal Sport Circle. (2003). *Aboriginal Coaching Manual: Reference Material*. Cornwall Island, ON: Aboriginal Sport Circle, Inc., Coaching Association of Canada and Sport Canada.

The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), *Recreation and Children and Youth Living in Poverty: Barriers, Benefits and Success Stories*. Developed by the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) for CPRA. © 2001.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2006, August 28). *First Nations in British Columbia*. Retrieved September 8, 2006, from [www.aincinac.gc.ca/bc/fnbc/fnbc\\_e.html](http://www.aincinac.gc.ca/bc/fnbc/fnbc_e.html)

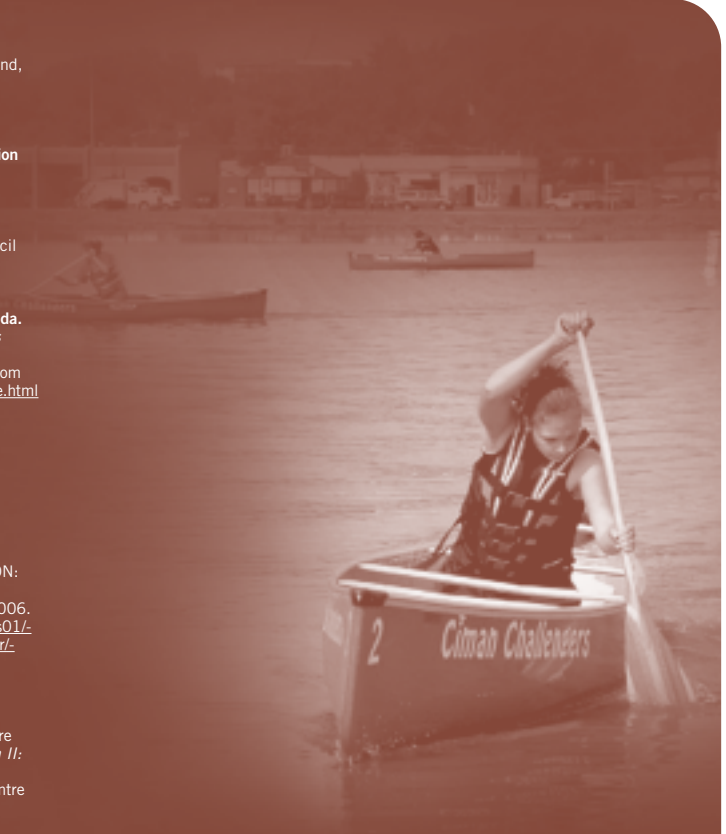
Parks and Recreation Ontario. (1999). *Together with Youth: Planning Recreation Services for Youth-at-Risk*. Toronto, ON: Parks and Recreation Ontario.

Statistics Canada. (2005). *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: A demographic Profile*. Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada, Demography Division. Retrieved August 28, 2006. [www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor-canada.cfm](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/abor-canada.cfm)

van der Woerd, K.A., Dixon, B.L., McDiarmid, T., Chittenden, M., Murphy, A. & The McCreary Centre Society (2005). *Raven's Children II: Aboriginal Youth Health in BC*. Vancouver, BC. The McCreary Centre Society.

Aboriginal Sports and Recreation Association of BC  
Tel: 250-544-8172 [www.asra.ca](http://www.asra.ca)

BRITISH COLUMBIA RECREATION AND PARKS ASSOCIATION  
101 - 4664 Lougheed Hwy, Burnaby, BC, Canada V5C 5T5  
Tel: 604.629.0965 Fax: 604.629.2651  
[bcrpa@bcrpa.bc.ca](mailto:bcrpa@bcrpa.bc.ca) [www.bcrpa.bc.ca](http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca)



# Sports and Recreation in Aboriginal Communities

## CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Recreation plays a significant role in the healthy development of all children and youth and it has been emphasized by child and youth workers and youth in Aboriginal communities that their needs are generally similar to non-Aboriginal youth.

Those working with Aboriginal children and youth need to be committed to creating positive and encouraging environments that allow them to talk, trust and feel.

The recreation worker plays an important role in helping children and youth discover who they are and their relationship to others within their environment.

It is vital that the youth are encouraged to be proud of and comfortable sharing their background, spiritual beliefs and practices.

Sport, leisure and recreation activities need to **focus** on the child and youth **strengths** and **skill building** rather than focusing on negative behaviours

***According to Raven's Children II, Aboriginal "youth are tired of hearing dire statistics about themselves, and want to see more positive news reflecting their progress into adulthood"*** (van der Woerd, 8)

***"Aboriginal youth are moving forward in their lives, and are prepared to support one another. And each and every one of them wants to be their own success story"*** (van der Woerd, 7)

## PROGRAMMING GUIDELINES

Working effectively with Aboriginal children and youth involves taking the time to learn about the culture of the Aboriginal community you are working in or where the Aboriginal youth are from. Researching the community will also help to **better understand the community's needs and resources available**.

### Did you know?

- About 4.5% of B.C.'s population identified themselves as Aboriginal. (van der Woerd)
- 8.4% of all B.C. public school students are Aboriginal (van der Woerd)
- About half of B.C.'s Aboriginal population is under the age of 25 (van der Woerd)
- In Canada, children under the age of 14 years represent one-third of the total Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada)
- There are about 198 First Nations Communities in British Columbia (INAC)
- 7 out of Canada's 11 unique language families are located exclusively in BC (INAC)
- There are over 170,000 Aboriginal people in British Columbia (Statistics Canada)

Aboriginal communities in BC have rich and varied cultures, histories and traditions. (INAC)

It is important for those working with Aboriginal children and youth to be aware of, understand and respect the different community protocols.

In developing and facilitating programs in Aboriginal communities it is essential to engage youth, elders, youth advocates, recreational leaders, youth workers, traditional teachers, educators and Aboriginal athletes.

### Be sure to:

- Ensure that children and youth are meaningfully represented in all stages of program development and decision making
- Recruit and train leaders from the community and/or provide cultural awareness sessions for staff working with Aboriginal children and youth
- As with all child and youth programs, tailor the program to meet the needs of children and youth

## BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

- Costly program fees and/or equipment
- Location of programs and facilities
- Transportation
- Inflexible program structures
- Experiences with racism

## BUILDING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

It is important to build community relationships. To do this you may want to:

Hold a formal meeting with families and community members to discuss the goals of your program, activities and how they can become more involved.

### Remember:

- To be open, and understand that each Aboriginal person has had unique experiences
- Try not to over generalize experiences or single out Aboriginal participants to educate the group unless they are comfortable doing so.
- Not all Aboriginal youth practice or have knowledge of Aboriginal culture, issues, activities or events.
- Not all Aboriginal youth will automatically embrace their heritage due to negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people

## RECLAIMING / RESTRENGTHENING CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION THROUGH SPORT AND RECREATION

One of the roles you can play is helping young people explore their cultural identity through recreation.

Find ways to include the cultural aspect in your program. Introduce ceremonies, song, and dance as a way of celebrating achievement or honouring guests. Learn about and honour the protocol of hostcommunities.

### Definitions:

There have been many terms that have been used to refer to Aboriginal people. These include Indian, Native, First Nations, Aboriginal, and Indigenous. Any and all of these terms can be both correct and incorrect. If you are unsure of the term to use it is best to ask!

Aboriginal peoples refer to the descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The three main groups of Aboriginal peoples are the First Nations (Indian, Native), Métis and Inuit. Each group has unique languages, cultural practices and history. (INAC)

Aboriginal Community is not restricted by geographical location; however it refers to Aboriginal communities both on and off-reserve, and in rural and urban centres. A community can be: a band or First Nation, a committee, an Aboriginal organization, or group of Aboriginal participants/members within an institution (i.e. A First Nation's Student Association)