

Make Change Through Sport

New Indigenous Sport and Recreation Certificate uses the power of sport to make a difference.

Together WE CAN...



Residential school survivors told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that participating in sport — hockey, baseball, basketball, boxing — made their lives more bearable by providing “a sense of identity, accomplishment and pride.” The TRC noted that sport has the potential to make an equally powerful difference today. A new UAlberta program gives recreational professionals the knowledge they need to enhance Indigenous youth participation in sport and recreation.

Essential Communication Skills

Michael Swampy, a UAlberta education student, recalls his high school basketball coach with fear and fondness. “Off the court he was the nicest guy, but on the court... He’s 6’9 and if you turned over the ball he’d let you know,” Swampy laughs. He attended Jasper Place High School after moving from Maskwacis, Samson Cree Nation, to Edmonton — a dramatic change from a small First Nations community to a big city and a big school where there weren’t many other Indigenous students. Having a coach who understood where he came from helped the transition. “He’s Métis himself, and our school counsellor told him about how students from the reserve had a different lifestyle, so he knew how to approach us and talk to us in ways that weren’t threatening,” Swampy says.

Now that Swampy is preparing to start his career teaching physical education to Indigenous youth, he believes the Indigenous Sport and Recreation Certificate, a partnership between the faculties of Physical Education and Recreation and Native Studies, will be an asset for recreation professionals. “If you’re a non-Indigenous person who wants to teach these kids, you have to learn how to communicate with Aboriginal people, how to become more relatable to Aboriginal students,” Swampy explains. “The typical physical education degree doesn’t teach you this type of communication, and that’s a huge aspect of working with Indigenous youth.”

Student Scholarships: Double the Value of Your Gift

Give now and your investment goes further. The university will match donations toward student scholarships up to \$40,000 per year for five years — a total goal of \$200,000. A \$4,000 gift becomes an \$8,000 scholarship, which covers tuition and the costs associated with a one-week, in-class session.

Donate online to the Indigenous Sport and Recreation Certificate at uab.ca/givetolSRC

Meeting a Demonstrated Need

As an Alberta Recreation and Parks Association programs manager, Janet Naclia, '96 BA, hosted a workshop for recreational directors from Indigenous communities. One of the participants asked whether she had considered acknowledging the treaty, acknowledging territories, opening with a prayer, or inviting an Elder. She hadn't.

"It made me realize that I needed to think deeper about the community I was working with," Naclia says. "It was embarrassing because I hadn't thought of these things and I should have."

Eager to correct her mistake, Naclia looked into learning more about working with Indigenous peoples but there was no single course, so she had to learn on her own.

The 10-month Indigenous Sport and Recreation Certificate program is tailored for working recreation professionals, such as Naclia, who already have a degree. Besides a one-week intensive classroom session, the majority of the course happens online. It is a convenient and affordable way for professionals to get the additional education they need to work respectfully and successfully with Indigenous communities.

"The certificate gives me a more concentrated amount of time to learn the things that I don't understand," Naclia says. "It legitimizes that knowledge. When I go out and do my job, it's nice to have a certificate from the University of Alberta that says I'm certified to talk about these things. If we don't have the context and the knowledge to work with Indigenous people, then we're not doing our job properly."

Invest in the Power of Sport

It takes a minimum of \$120,000 yearly to operate this program, and more to expand it, while keeping it affordable for recreation professionals. Aside from scholarships, further support from donors would allow for new course development and improved online teaching technology for a more comprehensive learning experience.

Donor investment is critical to ensuring sport and recreation professionals acquire the knowledge they need to enhance Indigenous youth participation in sport and recreation.

To make a donation or find out more, contact:

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"Indigenous people in Canada experience a disproportionate burden of health disparities, and sport and recreation may serve as one avenue for addressing the health of this young and growing population."

(McHugh, T., Holt, N., & Andersen, C. 2015)

A Growing Population

28% of the total Aboriginal population is under the age of 15, compared to 16.5% of the non-Aboriginal population.

The Aboriginal population growth rate (45%) is much higher than the non-Aboriginal population growth rate (8%).

Source: Statistics Canada

For Working Professionals

Flexible Structure: The 10-month certificate program includes three online courses and participation in a one-week mandatory in-class session.

Specialized Education: Participants learn the valuable role sport and recreation plays in Indigenous peoples' self-identity, the key policies that influence recreation, sport and physical activity in Indigenous communities, and the historical and contemporary roles of physical activity in the lives of Indigenous people.

Networking Opportunities: The certificate program's cohort model provides a sense of cohesion among participants as well as valuable networking opportunities with colleagues, allowing them to share best practices and resources for success.

