
Northern Fly-In Sports Camps In Winnepeg, Manitoba, Canada¹

Presenter:

Neil Winther,² Acting Associate Dean

Background

Approximately 80,000 of the one million people living in the central Canadian Province of Manitoba are of Native ancestry. Thirty thousand of these Native people live in remote fly-in communities. Over 50% of these isolated Native people are under the age of 18 years. Young Native men and women are highly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. For example, while only 8% of Manitoba's population is made up of native people, they account for 60% of the total inmate population in Manitoba provincial jails. The physical isolation and cultural differences have resulted in substantial differences between Native and non-Native people in Manitoba. The problems were well-stated by Chief Dennis Shorting of the Little Saskatchewan First Nation during his appearance before the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry:

We find ourselves in the fertile breeding ground of crime: high unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, substandard housing, inadequate healthcare; traditional, hunting, fishing and trapping rights being violated; a shortage of recreation facilities; and being subject to the law which many times we don't understand-laws which do not fit our culture, values and traditions.

Sports and Recreation Bridge the Gap Between Native and Non-Native Cultures

One organization which has bridged the gap between these two cultures and addressed the need for programs and training emphasizing the value of physical activity is Northern Fly-In Sports Camps Inc. (NFISC). Beginning with a pilot project in 1986 involving two communities, NFISC has delivered 63 summer sports and recreation programs in 26 different remote communities in Manitoba, Ontario, and the Northwest Territories.

NFISC is a Canadian nonprofit corporation which strives to enhance the quality of life for Native children and youth living in remote communities through the implementation of summer sports and recreation programs and youth leadership training. The Sports Camps were founded in 1986 by a volunteer Board of Directors who represent the fields of physical education, recreation, law, crime prevention, education, Native studies, medicine, and business. Each member of the Board had either lived in a remote Native community, worked extensively with Native people, or is Native.

Program

After reviewing a number of program approaches, a sport model was developed based on the "humanistic physical education" approach first conceptualized by Hellison (1973), a physical education professor at the University of Chicago. Hellison's model capitalizes on the highly interactive and emotional character of "life in the gymnasium and on the playing field,"

¹ Material is taken edited by Witt, P.A., & Crompton, J.L. (Eds.). (1996). *Recreation programs that work for at-risk youth: The challenge of shaping the future*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc.

Out of print, used by permission of publisher

² Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation Studies University of Manitoba Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2N2 Canada
Phone: (204) 474-9255

using sport and physical activity as a medium to teach self-discipline and social responsibility. The program also addresses the six generally accepted theories of delinquency proposed by Cohen in 1959 (see Exhibit 32A).

Youth in remote settlements liked the idea of university students coming to their communities for the summer to teach them new skills, and parents liked the idea of youth being occupied with meaningful activities. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) saw the crime reduction benefits of the NFISC programs and began providing free air transportation for instructional staff. RCMP personnel joined the Board of Directors and became volunteer instructors. Soon other government agencies recognized that NFISC could offer a unique community-based training opportunity for Native youth and began supporting training initiatives.

The present summer programs include sports, aquatics, creative arts, and outdoor recreation. The *sports component* includes individual sports such as golf, bowling, badminton, and juggling; team competitive sports such as lacrosse, field hockey, and soccer; and cooperative games such as tag, relays and obstacle courses. The *outdoor recreation program* teaches skills in the area of ecology, plant study, weather, orienteering, crafts, outdoor cooking, and astronomy. The *aquatics phase* focuses on boat safety, water safety, swimming, diving, water polo, synchronized swimming and aquatic fitness. The *creative arts section* emphasizes Native culture through local games, activities, crafts, art, beadwork, and moccasin making as well as singing, painting, and storytelling.

When possible, NFISC organizes a preplanning trip where meetings are held with the chief or mayor, school principal, RCMP members, and interested community members. The purpose of this meeting is to determine community needs and interests.

NFISC is available to First Nation and Metis communities who demonstrate community interest and support. In cooperation with NFISC, the host community advertises the program through various such as local television or word of mouth. The community also provides accommodation for the NFISC team, ensures equipment and facilities are available for the program's use and provides transportation where needed within the community.

Staffing and Funding

One full-time salaried employee, whose work is supplemented on occasion by outside expertise, is employed year round. During the summer months the staff expands to 14 to 20 people (depending on funding) who live in their assigned communities,

coordinating and leading various activities. These instructors represent a wide cross-section of university faculties including physical education and recreation studies, native studies, fine arts, education, and music.

A variety of delivery models have been explored through the years. However, the most successful model has been a two-phase program involving instructor training and program delivery. The first component of this model is the instructor training session where ten to 12 local youth receive a one-week workshop outlining basic administrative and program planning considerations for the operation of children's recreation programs. This training session also offers instruction in specific sports and recreation skills and suitable instructional techniques for the presentation of these skills to children and youth.

The second phase of the program commences in week two when a team of NFISC instructors comes to the host community and joins forces with the ten to 12 youth who were trained in the first week. Working together with volunteer RCMP, nursing, and North West Company personnel, the multiactivity program is delivered to the children in the community. Although NFISC's on-site staff spend only four weeks in each community, the program continues under the leadership of the local youth, who are hired by the community for the summer.

NFISC staff usually live in homes that teachers within the local communities have vacated during their summer holidays. Food for the summer staff is donated by the North West Company, Inc. or purchased by NFISC. The instructional staff are given access to community facilities and equipment.

Over 50 program sponsors have donated \$1 million in financial resources and \$1.5 million in products and services over the last seven years. The largest financial contribution was made by the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation through the Manitoba Community Services Council, Inc. Host communities and the RCMP have made the most significant contributions in terms of products and services. Other support has come from the Government of Manitoba Departments of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, Justice and Northern Affairs, Health and Welfare Canada, Employment and Immigration Canada, Manitoba Family Services, the Variety Club, Norman Regional Sport Association, Eastman Sports Development Council, and The North West Company Inc. The physical education and recreation studies program at the University of Manitoba has provided office space and administrative resources since the program was initiated in 1986.

Exhibit 32A**Goals of NFISC Related to Theories of Delinquency**

Reason for Delinquency	Goal of NFISC
Exposure to delinquent behavior models as social norms	Expose youth to positive role models (leaders) and positive peer pressure experiences.
Weak Social controls	Provide programs and group determined standards for behavior. Individuals involved in a recreation program will have social controls placed on them by coaches and peers.
Rebellion against perceived unrealistic goals	Provide the Opportunity for achievement of realistic objectives and increased activities which will reduce stress and frustration.
Boredom	Provide a variety of stimulating activities, thus offering something for everyone.
Need to assert masculinity	Provide opportunities for "power-brokers" and youth to work and play together on the same side. Provide opportunities for positive and constructive uses of power, strength, and aggression.
Labeling	Reinforce to youth that they are capable. Athletes enjoy status and with this status comes the expectation to conform.

Evidence of Program Outcomes

As a result of the NFISC programs, thousands of children and youth have benefitted from quality summer leisure-time programs. The activities provide a much needed break during the long days of summer and help to alleviate the boredom that is often associated with life in remote communities. An analysis of crime trends conducted in 1987 indicated that total crime for all remote communities north of

the 53rd parallel showed an increase of 11%, while the four communities visited by NFISC enjoyed a dramatic 17% decrease. During the summer of 1989, the duration of the program was extended to two months. This program was delivered to eight communities and resulted in crime reductions of 20% to 78% during the period the program was in operation, when compared to years when the program was unavailable. The following table illustrates these dramatic crime reductions:

Crime Reduction Impact of Northern Fly-In Sports Camps – 1989

Community	Total Pop.	Pop. 0-19 Years	% Reduction in Crime
St. Theresa Point	1,724	1,005	- 20
Brochet	646	360	- 56
Oxford House	1,260	550	- 67
Pukatawagan	1,359	710	- 41
Gods River	314	154	- 78
Moose Lake	962	423	- 43
Gods Lake Narrows	112	52	- 41
Cross Lake	2,938	1,755	- 47
Average			- 49

A study conducted in 1993 assessed the effects of Northern Fly-In Sports Camps on the daily life experiences of young offenders and potential offenders who participated in the programs. Using beepers that enabled the sampling of mood states and activities at specific times of the day, the study compared the levels of satisfaction, challenge, and the youths' subjective states of mood in their daily life experiences during the camp and when the camp was not present in the community. The subjects were also asked about their feelings towards and contact with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who participated as instructors in the program. Statistically significant results indicated that the program had a positive effect on participants' levels of happiness, enjoyment, interest, perceptions of leisure, and perceptions of the RCMP. Also, for some of the participants the camps relieved tension and anxiety regarding the well-being of friends. The RCMP were viewed both as more helpful, and more approachable when the camp was in operation.

There are also many benefits of the NFISC program both in terms of the community development, and the individual growth and development of participants. Some of these potential benefits include fun for the participants, the provision of new recreation programs, community development, youth training and employment, social development, skill acquisition, and reductions in crime rates in host communities.

Future Plans

The long-term goal of the NFISC Board of Directors was to transfer the Corporation's assets to an Aboriginal agency as soon as the program and training model were fully developed. NFISC is in the process of negotiating this transfer with the assistance of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (see Exhibit 32B).

Exhibit 32B

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs fully supports the objectives and activities of the Northern Fly-In Sports Camps program. The obvious benefits of this program to First Nation communities and their youth are significant. More particularly, the crime-rate decrease in those participating communities justifies the program and the need for a more aggressive campaign to be undertaken is critical to ensure for its continued development. Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, *Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Winnipeg, November 1991.*

References

- Cohen, A. K. (1959). The study of social disorganization and deviant behavior. In R. K. Merton, L. Brown, & L. S. Cottrell (Eds.), *Sociology today: Problems and prospects*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Hellison, D. R. (1973). *Humanistic physical education*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.