



2022-2023

COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



We respectfully acknowledge Spirit North partnerships and programs are in seven Treaty territories, on unceded lands in British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, and on lands that are home to the Métis. We honour these and all other First Nations, Inuit and Métis lands and are grateful for our relationships with the land and its Peoples.





**“I love skiing.
You know why?
Because nothing
else in life matters
when are skiing.
You just focus
and none of your
problems exist.”**

– Student, Lake Babine Nation

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MESSAGE FROM BECKIE SCOTT

On behalf of the entire team, I am delighted to share this comprehensive report highlighting our work and impact over the 2022–2023 year.

It has been a remarkable year of milestones and highlights for Spirit North. Working in partnership with communities, we reached more Indigenous children and youth this past year than at any other time in the history of the organization. From the tundra of the Beaufort Delta to downtown Winnipeg – the numbers of programs, activities, events, communities, children, youth, leaders, and staff has increased at an astonishing rate – nearly doubling in some cases.

The increased interest and demand for Spirit North’s programs across the country reinforced the need for us to keep pace internally and ensure sustainability across the organization. Together with our Board of Directors we created and rolled out a new three-year strategic plan; doubled down on our efforts to recruit, certify, and support new Community Leaders; strengthened our organizational systems and structures; increased our leadership capacity; and welcomed expert advisors to guide and inform critically important policies such as Child Safeguarding.

Our work in partnership with Indigenous communities is anchored in the belief that all children and youth have the right

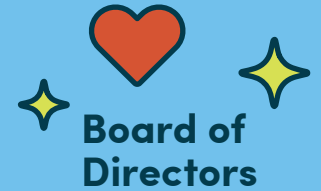


to be healthy and fulfill their potential, and the team at Spirit North is an extraordinary example of the difference that caring, inspired individuals can make.

With deep gratitude, and on behalf of all of us at Spirit North, thank you for joining us on this journey, for helping us to level the playing field, and for sharing our vision of a happier, healthier future for Indigenous children and youth.

Beckie Scott

Founder and CEO, Spirit North



Larry Greer,
Board Chair

Barbara Conkie
Dr. Sean Lessard

Jeff Horvath
Margaret Rosling

Heather Bishop
Fred Tolmie

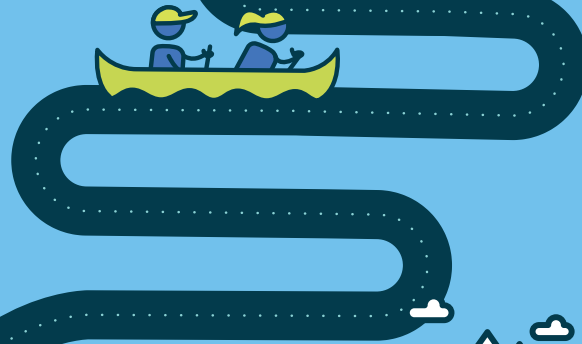
Carla Robinson

WE ARE SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

We are using the power of sport to support social change through access to opportunities that inspire and uplift, today and tomorrow.

We believe:

Sport has the potential to transform lives by improving participants' mental and physical wellbeing. In partnership with communities, we remove barriers so that all Indigenous youth can participate.



Along the way,

new skills and life lessons are gained as are positive connections with themselves, school, their communities and the land.



The result:

happier, healthier youth participating in a more fair, equitable and just society.



IMPACT AND REACH

Spirit North is building partnerships with new schools in communities where we have established relationships; and we are investing in new community partnerships across Canada. We are committed to growing programs sustainably with Indigenous community partners.



Student Participants

➤ Increased by 8,018 this season!



Total Program Days



Female-identifying



Male-identifying



Total Schools

➤ Increased by 100 schools



Total Communities

➤ Increased by 41 across Western Canada



Youth Leaders

➤ 6 Youth Leaders employed with Spirit North



Working in partnership with schools and communities across:

- British Columbia
- Alberta
- Saskatchewan
- Manitoba
- Ontario
- Northwest Territories



RECONCILIATION

We're committed to advancing reconciliation in Canada. In relationship with communities, we support Indigenous youth with resources and opportunities that seek to address the health legacy of residential schools, and support reconciliation through sport.

We strive to continuously learn from and work with Indigenous community partners to co-create programs and opportunities that:



Reflect each community's unique culture and needs



Create access to sport and play for all Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island



Are sustainable for generations to come



Create a work environment in which Indigenous peoples can thrive



REFLECTING INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES

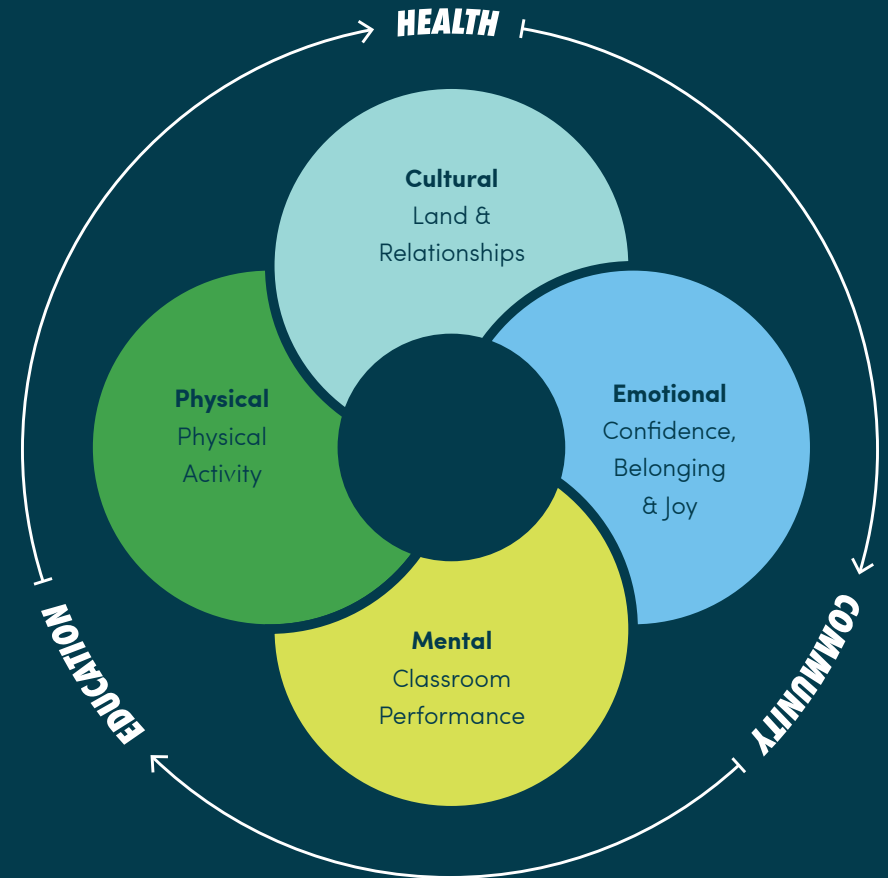
Health is holistic in an Indigenous worldview – encompassing physical, spiritual, emotional, and social aspects of wellbeing. Through co-created, holistic programs, Indigenous children and youth are realizing opportunities to grow and thrive within their communities.

We aim to measure Spirit North’s impact on health, education and community using Two-Eyed Seeing: an approach that respects and incorporates both Indigenous and Western perspectives to provide a fulsome view of program impact. We prioritize relationships and seek only minimally intrusive, voluntary data collection that is respectful of the rights, traditions and cultures of the Indigenous communities and peoples we work with.

“Think of a ball: one side black, the other white. You only see one colour from where you stand. Set in motion, both colours are revealed. Spirit North is getting the ball moving.”

– Ptâ Yedu Wîya, îyârhe Nakoda
Community Member

Holistic Approach to Wellness



RECLAIMING HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Bravely moving into the action, Indigenous youth are finding the confidence to participate and boldly dream of bright tomorrows.

Îyârhe Nakoda and Spirit North leader Ptâ Yedu Wîya says, Spirit North's approach to sport and play is helping her community's young people reclaim their health and wellness. Inclusive programs, nearly half of which are led by program leaders who are also community members, meet every child where they are at and reconnect youth to their language and culture.

Ptâ Yedu Wîya notes that colonial perspectives of sport differ from Indigenous perspectives, although both acknowledge the health and wellness benefits of physical activity.

Moving on the land, connecting with self and community is a cultural way of being for Indigenous people, and deeply linked to overall wellness. Traditionally, movement provided important skills and teachings necessary for survival on the land. Today, when a young person hears their traditional language, when the teaching reflects a

traditional way of doing, they can connect with the experience, see themselves reflected and open themselves to new experiences.

For Ptâ Yedu Wîya, sport was always a part of life, but with the focus often on performance and winning the experience wasn't always fun. A teaching received in her own language revived her spirit and continues to inspire her to support Indigenous youth to find wellness, discover their voice and look to tomorrow.

“Sport is intertwined in our history and cultural roots.”

— Ptâ Yedu Wîya, Spirit North Leader



HEALTH

We help close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities by promoting the physical and mental health benefits of sport and play activities.

“Spirit North makes physical activity fun and engaging. Kids have a chance to try sports they often face barriers to participation in. The fact that these activities are outdoors, makes it even better!”

— Teacher, Senpaq’cin School

97% 😊

indicate improved student **joy***

94% ★

indicate improved student **confidence***

89% 👥

indicate improved **student-to-student relationships***

80% 🏃

of participants reached or exceeded **60 minutes of physical activity** per day by participating in Spirit North programs.*

➤ Among **junior high** and **high school students** these percents are even higher!
We’re seeing measurable impact after five years of programming.

“Leaders are healthy role models, live active lifestyles and are always encouraging of the students.”

— Principal, Outma Squilx’w Cultural School

What our partners say we do best:

No or low cost access to sport opportunities



100% STRONGLY AGREE

Spirit North programs **encouraged** and **inspired** other community members to be active.*

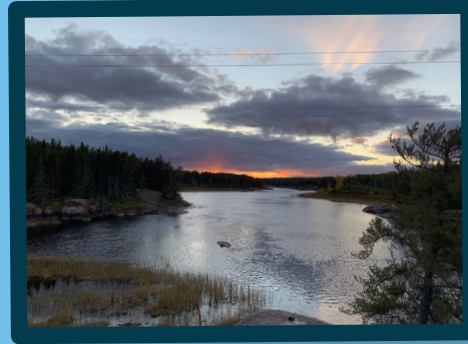
*Percent of educator respondents who noted high school student improvement in the reported evaluation criteria in the 2022–2023 Evaluation Survey.

PHOTOVOICE

We're transferring the power of storytelling into the hands of youth: capturing their unique experiences and perspectives in their voices.



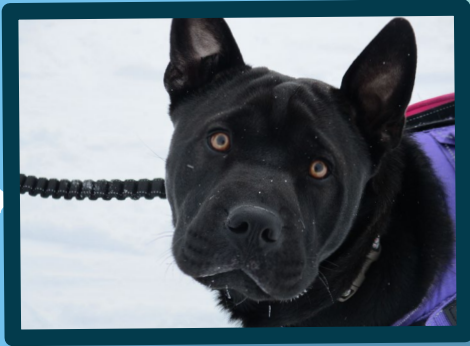
"It was tough going climbing with Spirit North because I was trying to find gaps in the rock and there was a risk that I would fall. But then I got to the top and it made me feel like a new person." – Auston



"The sound of nature and how the sun is reflecting off the clouds and the water is nice, this makes me feel calm." – Daisy



"I don't want this to end. Jumping off my board into the lake was the best." – Atrato



"I like skiing, it's fun and I love playing games on skis. Sunshine's a great dog and it was fun having her out while we were skiing." – Aaliyah



"I like hills better than I like kilometres."
– Haden



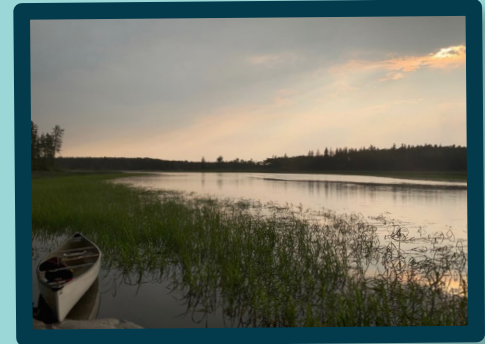
"We made this fort in grade 2. We made windows and a little door. We were learning about shelters. I'd stay overnight in there." – Lily



"I like biking best when I'm with friends and when it's windy because it's soothing."
– Kalei



"Canoeing brings you to places you can't see by driving and walking. I learned a lot from canoeing with Allison. Being out in nature is important." – Jenelle



"Next year I want to canoe more. Swimming is fun but my favourite part about camp was going on longer canoe trips." – Tiffany

REMOTE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Rocky Lane was abuzz with action as 150 youth took to skis for a day of fun. The spring ski festival saw Indigenous youth connect with peers from six communities, challenge their skills and begin dreaming of next ski season.

For the past six winters, Spirit North leader Annika Olesen has traveled to Little Red River Cree Nation territory, bringing ski programs to the Nation's schools and communities. "Students were so keen after the first season, four schools bought equipment." Very much a partnership, Olesen supports resource-stretched teachers with ski programs that get students moving on the land in winter.

Like the slow but continuous shift of seasons, trust among teachers, community and students has developed over time, as each year Annika remained true to her commitment to return next season. With trust comes a shift in attitude, an increased willingness to participate. "Especially among older youth, strong relationships and confidence in skill go a long way in convincing them to take part," says Olesen. Always ready to get outside, Olesen sees each winter day as a fresh opportunity for youth to feel the winter sun, connect with the land, themselves and their community.

"The overall feeling of community while skiing is amazing. Even a simple ski and campfire makes a memorable impression. Working closely with Annika to facilitate ski days and encourage growth in our students has been one of the most rewarding parts of the program and my school year." — Teacher, Sister Gloria School



COMMUNITY

We elevate sport and play as a fundamental part of health and wellbeing, and we support active communities through local events and dedicated programming.

“Students had a chance to share their songs on the powwow drum and perform a few dances at the closing ceremonies, which gave them a great sense of pride and accomplishment.”

— Educator, Senpaq’cin School



Multi-year partners

83 

schools

60 

communities

New partnerships

100 

schools

41 

communities



10 

local, regional, and provincial sports competitions and events with **341 Spirit North participants**

(Jackrabbits, Lake Louise Loppet, Piikani Lacrosse Camp, Archery Competition, Fishing Competition, Community Weekend Ski)



17 

Spirit North Family Nights and after-school programs

(Ski Team, Family Nights, disc golf, SUP, lacrosse, MTB, Climbing)



9 

Festivals celebrating community, culture and play



CO-CREATION

Since day one, we've been co-creating programs that reflect each community's unique values, goals and strengths and respect local knowledge, experience and culture.



Co-creation sessions this year.



Co-creation sessions with new community partners:

- Wheatland Crossing
- Piikani First Nation
- Peguis First Nation
- Fisher River School
- Shoal Lake 49
- Baibombeh School



YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Spirit North's Youth Leadership Program provides a pathway for Indigenous youth to grow leadership and life skills that help prepare them to meet adulthood with confidence.

At each stage, mentor relationships with Spirit North's Community Program Leaders set youth up for leadership success. While attending high school, Indigenous youth can grow their paid job experience with Spirit North:

- Pursuing meaningful sport and recreation employment in their home communities
- Building confidence and leadership skills in a culturally safe environment
- Gaining life skills that carry into the future.

Through the Youth Leadership Program, we're working to reduce barriers facing Indigenous youth as they shift from school to the work world.

TRAINED AND CERTIFIED LEADERS

Spirit North leaders have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver safe and fun programs where every child can realize success. We're always learning!

56 certifications in 2022-2023

- Paddle Canada Waterfront
- Stand Up Paddle Board Flatwater Instructor
- Wilderness Mental Health First Aid
- Wilderness First Aid
- Lifesaving Certified Bronze Cross

Inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing, when appropriate

- Visit to Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre
- Integrating Traditional Games into programs
- Mental Health Wilderness First Aid certification for Spirit North leaders

Learning from one another

- Leader Training in Canmore, AB
- Leader Training in Penticton, BC



"Spirit North staff are really keen to do anything, so the games were very high energy. It was really exciting to see their willingness to learn!"

— Dakota Nepoose on teaching Double Ball to Spirit North Leaders with Jake Finney

NURTURING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

For Dakota Nepoose and his friends, sport was an outlet during the struggles of youth. Through sport's impact, the friends saw their lives transformed: they became teachers, lawyers, athletes and coaches.

Inspired to create similar positive experiences for Samson Cree Nation's youth, Nepoose has returned to his home community. In collaboration, teachers, community partners and the Spirit North leader are bringing in-school and after-school programs, camps, cultural events, and mentoring opportunities to the Nation's young people.

In Nepoose, Indigenous youth can see themselves reflected. He is a role model and mentor. "It is very fulfilling to see a young person you used to coach begin their own journey – to watch them grow in new ways. These opportunities have a positive trickledown effect in our community," says Nepoose, who uses what he's learned to support others.

When he can, Nepoose uses the medicine wheel as a model to teach balance – shifting focus away from skill and performance to share teachings that apply on the field, in the classroom and to life. In addition,

the Spirit North leader applies knowledge gained through diverse coaching certifications, participation in immersive learning with Indigenous program leaders from around the world, and traditional game learnings, to inspire and encourage a generation of young people to realize the potential within.

"This opportunity keeps me in my community, engaged with my community and in good relations with relatives, friends and family."

– Dakota Nepoose, Samson Cree Nation member and Spirit North Leader



EDUCATION

We collaborate with schools and communities to create programs that reflect local needs, and invest in resources, training, certification, and mentorship to ensure these benefits last for generations to come.

“Leah and Luke were interactive with the students in a way that allowed both parties to shift roles from teacher to student and vice versa. While Leah and Luke displayed their mastery over outdoor winter sports through discussions, lessons, and workshops, the students were able to display their knowledge of traditions, language, and culture while Luke and Leah joined the students on the land.”

— Teacher, Moose Kerr School

WHAT OUR PARTNERS SAY WE DO BEST



No or low cost access to outdoor activity



High quality leaders



Connection to land and culture

After five years of programming, we're seeing lasting benefits among high school students

100% ★

indicate increased willingness to participate*

92% 📍

indicate increased attendance on Spirit North days*

87% 🎯

indicate improved classroom focus*

*Percent of educator respondents who noted high school student improvement in the reported evaluation criteria in the 2022-2023 Evaluation Survey.

FINANCIALS & FUNDRAISING

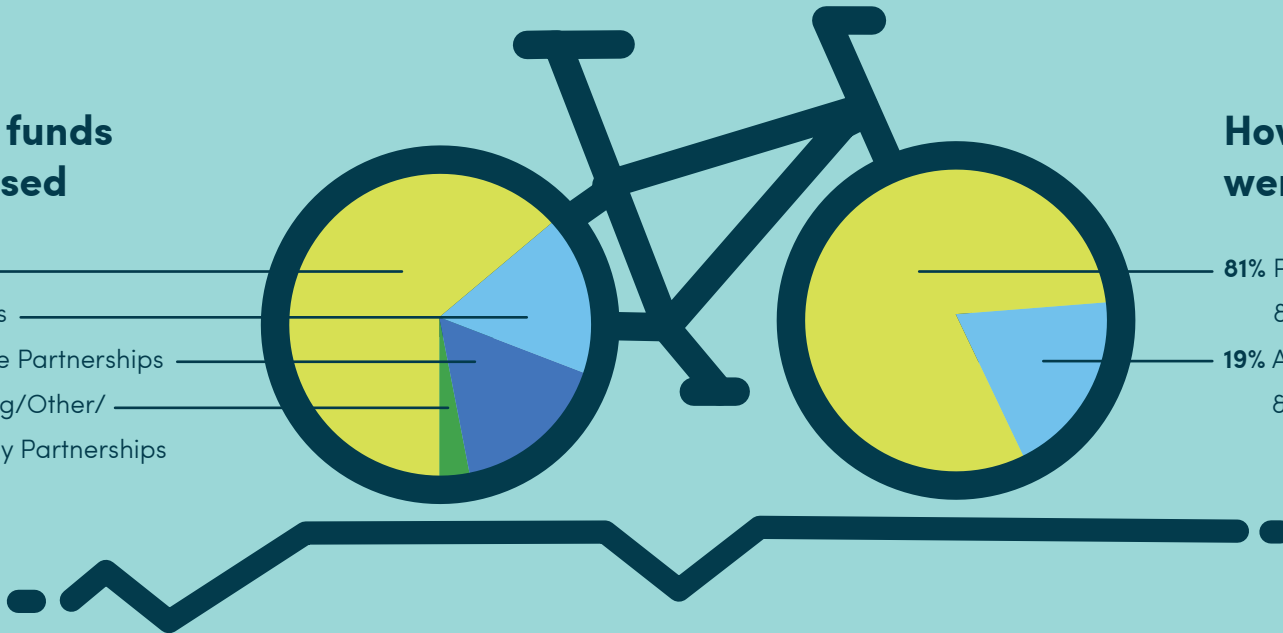
Spirit North is a registered charity. 798035515 RR0001

How the funds were raised

- 64% Grants
- 17% Donations
- 16% Corporate Partnerships
- 3% Fundraising/Other/
Community Partnerships

How the funds were used

- 81% Programs
& Operations
- 19% Administration
& Fundraising



BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

2009-2016

Beckie Scott, OC joins Ski Fit North as ambassador. From 2009-2016, Beckie:

- Travels & skis with kids in northern AB communities.
- Observes the power of sport to uplift, create health & wellness benefits, and sees a chance to support many more youth!

Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada publish their report & 94 Calls to Action

- Includes sport in reconciliation.
- Sport as way to support health & healing.

2017-2021

- Takes Flight – Spirit North incorporates in 2017.
- Receives charitable status in 2018.
- Federal grants facilitate new programs in BC, SK, MB, and ON.
- Co-Creation Workshops introduce individualized, community guided programs.

2022-2023

- New programs across Western Canada and NWT.
- Lasting Impact: Youth Leadership Program
 - Early Spirit North participants become program, youth and community leaders, acquiring leadership and life skills.
- Program Growth – Participant numbers more than double compared to 2021-2022. Spirit North partners with 100 new schools.



THE PATH AHEAD



Growing the Youth Leadership Program to include employment opportunities for Indigenous youth.



More year-round programs in communities.



Hiring more Community Program Leaders in remote communities.

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS

Your belief in our work has brought smiles and opportunity to Indigenous children and youth.

Premier Partners



Official Partners



Supporters





SPIRIT NORTH



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