

2009 Northern Physical Activity Roundtable

Just fewer than sixty participants of the 2009 Northern Physical Activity Roundtable listened to various presenters on the importance and value of physical activity, provincial physical activity programs, how to increase physical activity in various settings, and successful programs and initiatives in northern Saskatchewan. Some consistent themes emerged ... our bodies were designed to be physically active and northern culture has supported that activity and it's never too late to start leading an active lifestyle. Regardless of the sector we work in - health, education or recreation, we can support children and youth and all northerners to be more physically active at home, in the school setting, and in the community. This fourth annual roundtable was held at Elk Ridge Resort near Waskesiu on March 24 & 25. Funding support was provided by the Community Initiatives Fund.

Highlights of the first day included a presentation from Dr. James Irvine on the physical inactivity issue, particularly on our health, and the latest research; an update on Saskatchewan *in motion* strategies including a new 30/30/30 (home, school, community) and family strategy to support children and youth to receive the 90 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity they need each day from Marnie Sinclair; and keynote speaker Chief Tammy Cook-Searson of Lac la Ronge Indian Band. Chief Cook-Searson spoke of her participation in physical activity through traditional culture activity, as well as more recently with running. She stressed that we can all "plant the seed" to support others to be physically active and we need to believe that we can do it. Chief Cook-Searson has done just that, with support of the Running/Walking Club at Gordon Denny School, she implemented a 10 week running program that attracted over 75 participants! The same program was also done in Stanley Mission. She has also participated in half and full marathons.

The late afternoon and evening included time to 'walk the talk', to be active in the many opportunities offered at Elk Ridge including skiing, snowshoeing, sliding, and swimming. An excellent supper was provided with a recognition program. This year's recipients recognized for their work in educating and providing physical activity opportunities were: Senator Myles Venne School, Jan Shewchuk, Stony Rapids community and school, Gordon Denny Community School, Prince Albert Grand Council Wellness Committee and Bill Jeffery with Ski Fit North.

The second day of the roundtable was jump started with a keynote presentation from Waneek Horn-Miller. Waneek is Mohawk from the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory located on the south shore of Montreal. Waneek has many achievements in sport, including the Olympics, competing in water polo. Waneek spoke of the support and strength she received from her family and in particular her mother. Her mother did three important things for her four daughters – allowed no alcohol in their house, provided healthy food, and she got them involved in sport. She encouraged everyone to personally and support youth to be the best they could be. Waneek was followed by very informative panel presentations on available programs and resources from the Stephanie Cool with the Heart & Stroke Foundation – Primary Prevention Program; Colleen Charles, facilitator of the "On the Move" program, a CAAWS (Canadian Advancement for Aboriginal Women in Sport and Physical Activity) program for Aboriginal girls to be involved in sport and physical activity; and Holly Stevens with the Saskatchewan Physical Education Association.

Community success stories were then shared by Anne Dorion and students at Churchill Learning Centre, and Elaine Boychuk with Kids First North and Maureen McKay with the Diabetes

Program at Kikinahk Friendship in La Ronge. Thank you to these organizations for their excellent work in offering physical activity opportunities for the families, children and youth in their community. The final breakout sessions closed the day with three topics designed to support all ages: Active Start (part of the Canadian Sport for Life policy for 0-6 year olds); Children and Youth participation in physical activity and physical education (and in particular females); and Workplace/Adult Physical Activity.