



REACHING EACH AND EVERY ONE

Success Story

Our Water Activity Workshops at Camp Connections in the Northwest Territories (NWT), focusing on paddling, rescue, and skill-building for youth, empowering them with practical knowledge and paddle boards.

Sports and recreation offer “building blocks” to Yellowknife youth

A WEEKLY KICKBOXING CLASS REMINDS a young man to take a deep breath and walk away from a fight, which prevents him from being incarcerated.

A group of kids show up at the beach to set up a net on the sand and play a game of beach volleyball.

Regular trips to the gym inspire a young teenage mother, who has little family support, to build a career as a personal trainer. As youth worker Bianca Romagnoli bluntly puts it, this precious gym time “could be the thing that saves her life.”



HOME BASE YELLOWKNIFE,
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Canada

This project is funded by
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Winter Wilderness First Aid Training sessions in the Northwest Territories provide young people with valuable skills, safety, and connection to the land.

These are just some of the impacts that sports and recreation opportunities have had on youth who access Home Base Yellowknife - an organization that aims to prevent, reduce and eliminate youth homelessness.

The organization has given vulnerable youth these incredible opportunities through its project Youth in Motion, which was made possible thanks to the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association's Reaching Each and Every One: A Community Sport Intervention program. This program, which was funded by Sport Canada's Community Sport for All Initiative, seeks to remove barriers and increase sport participation rates for equity deserving groups across Canada.

"A lot of our youth in our community, unfortunately, have this sort of fight or flight mentality," explains Romagnoli, funding coordinator for Home Base Yellowknife. "But this grant has taught them to care for themselves in a lot of different ways. They now see that recreation and sport is one of the ways they care for their body, care for themselves, and care for their community."

As part of Youth in Motion, Home Base Yellowknife has partnered with local clubs and organizations to deliver a variety of weekly sports programs to its youth – including paddleboarding, kickboxing, hip hop dancing, yoga, and trips to the gym.

"We have something going everyday. Without the grant's help, we wouldn't be able to do all this," says Vincent Ret, Home Base Yellowknife's program coordinator.

Ret and Romagnoli say the funding has covered the costs of all the higher-priced equipment for these activities, such as water shoes, life jackets, and paddle boards. But it's also paid for the basics that are unaffordable for these youth – like socks, T-shirts and bathing suits.

"Some of these kids have literally nothing," says Romagnoli. "It's not that they don't own a paddleboard. They don't own shoes, or bathing suits, or towels.



Our snowboarding event offers exhilaration, education, and fun for young participants, promoting fitness, indoor workshops, and delicious snacks, ensuring accessibility and promoting career opportunities.

When youth have access to these basic items, she says it helps them overcome a significant barrier to sports that's often invisible: embarrassment.

"Some of these youths don't want to participate in sports because they're embarrassed to admit that the only clothes they own, are the clothes they're wearing," she explains. "If they get in the water in those clothes, they have no more clothes to put on."

Ret adds that many of Home Base's youth also face barriers to accessing a variety of programming, and don't have exposure to different activities they might be interested in.

"I wanted to provide as many different programs as possible, just for them to be able to have options," he says. "There are some kids who don't want to go to the gym, but they like doing yoga. It's a great thing for them to be able to pick whatever activity they want."

Ret and Romagnoli also say that the opportunities provided through Youth in Motion have helped participants feel a sense of ownership of recreational spaces, which has ultimately made a positive impact on the Yellowknife community.

"Now when the kids go to the skate park, it's not a place to vandalize or hang out and disrupt people. This program has changed the way they see space, and value property," Romagnoli says, adding that the program has also changed the community's perception of these youth. "The community sees them at the beach being kids. They see them at the gym like they're regular citizens. They're seen as human beings now."

Ultimately, Ret and Romagnoli describe the Youth in Motion program as life-changing for the youth at Home Base Yellowknife — offering them opportunities and hope for a brighter future.

"It's these little things that are the building blocks of a better life," Romagnoli says. 🍁