



# Imagining New Futures For Community Grassroots Sport In Alberta

**A Summary Of The Sport For Life/SPARC Alberta Summit**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We begin by acknowledging our location on Treaty 6 territory, in the place known as Edmonton or Amiskwaciwāskahikan. Treaty 6 is the traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Metis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others. As settlers on these lands, the members of SPARC Alberta are committed to ensuring that the spirit of Treaty 6 is honoured and respected. As such, we want to be held accountable for the ways our practices and programs contribute to the ongoing injustices of colonization.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit and the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association's Leadership Summit. The experiences and learnings that were shared during the event were foundational to this report.

We would also like to thank the members of the SPARC Leadership Group. Your guidance and advice has been invaluable.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## WHAT IS SPARC ALBERTA?

SPARC Alberta is a multi-stakeholder collaborative of partners in sport, physical activity, and recreation from across Alberta. Our work builds on the commitment and dedication within sector to envision a future where all children and youth have access to quality sport and recreation environments that foster equity, diversity, inclusion.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY GRASSROOTS SPORT?

Community grassroots sport refers to recreational sporting opportunities developed by communities for communities. As part of a broader network of Alberta's sport and recreation system, these recreational sporting opportunities are intended to be compatible with, but separate from, traditional competitive sporting structures. The primary goal within these sporting environments is fun, belonging, and development.

## WHY IS A COMMUNITY GRASSROOTS SPORT APPROACH NECESSARY?

There is a growing recognition that our existing sport and recreation structures (competitive and recreational) are not meeting the needs of the majority of children and youth. And while it has been argued that the current system failures have been building for decades, the inequities and suboptimal practices in youth sport have been hugely exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT?



*“The majority of Canadian community sport activities and other recreational activities were cancelled throughout various stages of the pandemic. Nearly 90% of sport participants were impacted during this time.”*

– Power of Sport: The True Sport Report, Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport

Consistent with the calls that recreation and sport organizations must work with communities to “build back better”, this report offers a made-in-Alberta approach to reimagining community grassroots sport. The information presented is a summary of the calls to action shared during the 2022 Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit: Creating a Bright Future for Community Grassroots Sport in Alberta and the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association's Leadership Summit.



## CALLS TO ACTION

The calls to action are a summary of the information shared by the Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta presenters (leading researchers, practitioners and policy makers from across sport, physical activity and recreation) and delegates. Collectively, the calls to action provide some ideas about how we might reflect, reconnect and reimagine community grassroots sport across Alberta.

The information presented is not meant to be prescriptive, nor is it meant to be a full account of the work that needs to be done. As has been noted by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, developing sporting opportunities that are fun, fair, and inclusive *“is not the job of sport alone.”* The calls to action should therefore be read as a collection of ideas about how various sectors and levels of government might engage in a multi-phase process intended to increase grassroots sport and recreation opportunities for children and youth across the province.

CALLS TO ACTION	PROPOSED STRATEGIES
<b>Acknowledge the issues with existing sport and recreation systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Sector wide collaboration to build blueprints for change which recognize that little changes can have a big impact.</li> <li>+ Center the participant, not our organizations. Youth first, always.</li> <li>+ Ensure social justice and reconciliation are at the heart of the work we do.</li> </ul>
<b>Define quality, community grassroots sporting experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Ensure sport and recreation are accessible to all.</li> <li>+ Prioritize fun, belonging, and development over winning, travel, and elitism.</li> <li>+ Programs and systems should be co-developed with children and youth.</li> </ul>
<b>Develop a long-term vision for community grassroots sport in Alberta</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Offer a new vision and philosophy for community grassroots sport and recreation that clearly identify outcomes.</li> <li>+ Work collaboratively across the sector and beyond to develop long-term vision for community grassroots sports.</li> <li>+ Ensure the long-term vision accounts for urban and rural differences.</li> </ul>
<b>Utilize resources in a way that serves more members of our communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Examine the inequitable distribution of funding and embed equity in funding models.</li> <li>+ Outline a process for securing appropriate and adequate resources for the sector.</li> <li>+ Engage with corporate partners to develop long term sustainable funding partnerships.</li> </ul>
<b>Develop mechanisms to authentically engage with communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Provide opportunities to listen to and engage with equity-denied groups.</li> <li>+ Utilize diverse leaders and develop community-led mechanisms to make sure all voices are heard and valued.</li> <li>+ Embrace the notion of “nothing about us, without us”, including youth voices.</li> </ul>

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CALLS TO ACTION	PROPOSED STRATEGIES
<b>Leverage local infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Innovative use of public spaces, including schools and municipal recreation infrastructure.</li> <li>+ Rethink processes for facility allocation to ensure quality, equity, and safety.</li> <li>+ Rethink age, gender, and ability categories to maximize facilities and time for all children and youth.</li> </ul>
<b>Utilize new and existing partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Collaborate and partner with Indigenous-led organizations.</li> <li>+ Engage with corporate partners and other sectors, collaboration is key to success.</li> <li>+ Move from transactional relationships to transformative relationships that value.</li> </ul>
<b>Take Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Seriously</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Ensure diversity in leadership positions (through equitable processes).</li> <li>+ Make equity, diversity and inclusion guiding principles for all programs and systems.</li> </ul>
<b>Develop mechanisms for capacity building and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Centralized, accessible certification and training for all (coaches, volunteers, officials, etc.).</li> <li>+ Training to support non-profit and volunteer run organizations.</li> <li>+ Other capacity building supports as they arise.</li> </ul>
<b>Support, share, and promote research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Support research and share existing/ promising practices.</li> <li>+ Develop ongoing mechanisms for knowledge translation.</li> <li>+ Communicate the value of sport in the broader political and social context.</li> </ul>

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit has brought us one step closer to creating new futures for community grassroots sport in cities and towns across Alberta. Using the information throughout this document, we hope to take the next steps in developing a province-wide community grassroots sporting system that values critical reflection, innovation, collaboration, and community accountability.

# ABOUT SPARC ALBERTA

SPARC Alberta is a multi-stakeholder collaborative of partners in sport, physical activity, and recreation from across Alberta. Our work builds on the commitment and dedication within the SPAR sector to envision a future where all children and youth have access to quality sport and recreation environments that foster equity, diversity, inclusion in their own communities. Through this work we hope to build a more collaborative and resilient system whereby sport, recreation, health, and education sectors are aligned and working together to address barriers and strive towards quality programming that is equitably available to everyone.

SPARC Alberta is guided by key strategic plans such as the 2019 Well-Being and Resiliency: A Framework for Supporting Safe And Healthy Children And Families,

2014 Going the Distance: The Alberta Sport Plan, a 10-year vision for sport in Alberta, and the Alberta Sport Action Plan (2019).

To learn more about SPARC Alberta visit [sparcalberta.ca](https://sparcalberta.ca)

## SPARC Alberta is led by a collaborative leadership team from Across Alberta.

### Members of the multi-stakeholder collaborative include:

- + **Heather Cowie**, General Manager, Community and Protective Services at City of Fort Saskatchewan (Chair)
- + **Steve Allan**, Executive Director, Alberta Recreation and Parks Association
- + **Brian Torrance**, Executive Director, Ever Active Schools
- + **Jennifer Leo**, Executive Director, The Steadward Centre for Personal & Physical Achievement, University of Alberta
- + **Jennifer Wilson**, Recreation Specialist, Strathcona County
- + **Stuart Rose**, Sport Development Advisor, The City of Calgary
- + **Dr. Nick Holt**, Dean, Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary
- + **Eoghan Curran**, Sport and Partner Liaison, City of Edmonton
- + **Jacob Hendy**, Executive Director, Indigenous Sport Council Alberta
- + **Richard Way**, Chief Executive Officer, Sport for Life
- + **Liz Herbert**, Manager of National PLAY Assessments and Physical Literacy for Communities, Sport for Life
- + **Marci Scharle**, Community Development Officer, Alberta Culture
- + **Kerry McAndrews**, Municipal Rec Policy Analyst, Alberta Culture
- + **Claire Paterson**, Coach Education Coordinator, Alberta Soccer

# A TIMELINE OF SPARC ALBERTA ACTIVITIES

## March 2000

### Launch

## October 2020

### The Honourable Lois E. Mitchell becomes an ambassador for SPARC Alberta:

In the 2020 press release, Mitchell stated, "I am proud to act as an ambassador for SPARC Alberta. Together we will work towards achieving the vision for all children and youth in Alberta to be a part of an inclusive sport environment that is strength based and values positive youth development."

## February 2021

### ARPA Leaders Summit Session:

Co-presented with Marco Di Buono, this interactive session focused on the value of positive youth development in sporting environments and how it could be integrated into existing recreation and sport programs.

## September 2021

### PYD E-Learning Module is launched:

Aligned with other healthy child development champions, including HIGH FIVE® and Sport for Life, this online training brings together tips, tools, and strategies to help coaches, leaders, and volunteers create positive sport experiences for children and youth. To date more than 100 individuals have completed the online training.

## October 2021

### ARPA Conference Session:

A plenary session was hosted at the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association's annual conference. A special member resolution was also passed at the ARPA Annual General Meeting.

### ARPA Conference Session:

These ongoing learning opportunities provided participants with an opportunity to engage in conversations about community sport. A total of five webinars were hosted and over 150 people attended.

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## January 2022

### Sector Survey:

In early 2022, SPARC conducted a short survey in an attempt to better understand the sectors needs in the area of community grassroots sport. The top two needs were increases in funding and resources and better training for coaches and volunteers. Access to more infrastructure and partnerships and collaborations also scored very highly.

## May 2022

### Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit:

Part of a multi-city event hosted by Sport for Life in various communities across Canada, the Summit combined a number of virtual keynotes hosted by Sport for Life, with live and local content curated by SPARC Alberta. A total of 125 delegates from across Alberta attended the two-day event.

### ARPA Leaders Summit Session:

Sharing some of the learnings from the 2022 Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit, this session was an opportunity for leaders in the recreation sector to discuss the future of grassroots community sport in their municipalities across the province.

## October 2022

### Delphi Study Launched:

In collaboration with Dr. Kacey Neely and Dr. Kerry Mummery, SPARC Alberta launched the first ever Delphi study looking at Sports-Based Positive Youth Development in Canada.

## December 2022

### Calls to Action Released

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

There is a growing recognition that our existing sport and recreation structures (competitive and recreational) are not meeting the needs of the majority of children and youth. <sup>i, iii, iii</sup> And while it has been argued that the current system failures have been building for decades, the inequities and suboptimal practices in youth sport have been hugely exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. <sup>v, vi</sup>

*“The majority of Canadian community sport activities and other recreational activities were cancelled throughout various stages of the pandemic. Nearly 90% of sport participants were impacted during this time.”*

– Power of Sport: The True Sport Report, Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport

Consistent with the calls that recreation and sport organizations must work with communities to “build back better”, this report offers a made-in-Alberta approach to reimagining community grassroots sport. The information presented is a summary of insights shared during the 2022 Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit: *Creating a Bright Future for Community Grassroots Sport in Alberta* and the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association’s Leadership Summit.

The report has been divided into three sections. The first section provides an overview of the ideas shared by keynote and plenary speakers who presented at the 2022 Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit. The second section summarizes what we heard from delegates who participated in a series of facilitated discussions at the Sport for Life/SPARC Summit and the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association’s Leadership Summit. The last section provides an overview of next steps. Collectively, these three sections are intended to help the SPAR sector and community members to answer the following question:

**+ How might we (re)imagine new futures for community grassroots sport in cities and towns across Alberta?**

The information presented throughout this report is not meant to be prescriptive, nor is it meant to be a full account of the work that needs to be done. As has been noted by the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, developing sporting opportunities that are fun, fair, and inclusive “is not the job of sport alone.” The information in this report should therefore be read as a collection of ideas about how various sectors and levels of government might engage in a multi-phase process intended to increase grassroots sporting opportunities for children and youth across the province. In other words, the information in this report invites a variety of stakeholders to consider their role in developing and delivering grassroots sport and recreation opportunities; and in doing so it emphasizes the importance of a province-wide community grassroots sport and recreation system that values critical reflection, innovation, collaboration, and community accountability.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY GRASSROOTS SPORT?

Community grassroots sport refers to recreational sporting opportunities developed by communities for communities. As part of a broader network of Alberta's sport and recreation system, these recreational sporting opportunities are intended to be compatible with, but separate from, traditional competitive sporting structures. The primary goal within these sporting environments is fun, belonging and development.

This definition, while reflective of the efforts of SPARC Alberta, is rooted in three national and international concepts:

### 1. Grassroots Sport

Grassroots sport is physical leisure activity, organised and non-organised, practiced regularly at a non-professional level for health, educational or social purposes.

– *High Level Group of Grassroots Sport, Commission Europeene*

### 2. Quality Sport

Quality sport is developmentally appropriate (good programs), safe and inclusive (good places), and well run (led by good people).

– *Sport for Life*

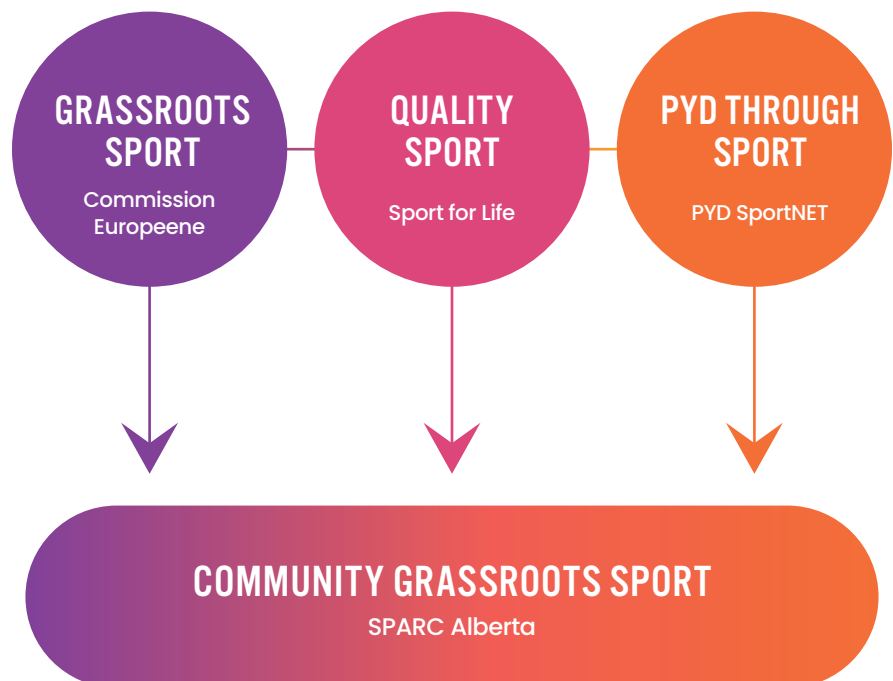
### 3. Positive Youth Development (PYD) Through Sport

"PYD through sport is intended to facilitate youth development via experiences and processes that enable participants in adult-supervised programs to gain transferable personal and social life skills, along with physical competencies. These skill and competency outcomes will enable participants in youth sport programs to thrive and contribute to their communities."

(Holt, Smyth, & Deal, 2016, p. 231)

#### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNITY GRASSROOTS SPORT?

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# SECTION ONE:

**THE 2022 SPORT FOR LIFE/SPARC ALBERTA SUMMIT:  
AN OVERVIEW**



# THE SPORT FOR LIFE/SPARC ALBERTA SUMMIT

The 2022 Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit: Creating a Bright Future for Community Grassroots Sport in Alberta was a two-day event that took place on May 11th and 12th. Part of a multi-city event hosted by Sport for Life in various communities across Canada, the Summit combined a number of virtual keynotes hosted by Sport for Life, with live and local content curated by SPARC Alberta. Collectively, this robust program of leading researchers, practitioners, and policy makers from across the sport, physical activity, and recreation (SPAR) sector provided delegates with an opportunity to hear innovative ideas, discuss challenges and success, and foster connection, understanding and creativity. A total of 125 delegates from across Alberta attended the event.

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## SECTION ONE OVERVIEW

The information presented in this section is intended to build on the Summit theme “Reflect, Reconnect, and Reimagine.” Through a thematic review of the presentation transcripts, this section uses the insights and learnings offered by those who spoke at the Summit to answer the question, “What does reflection, reconnection, and reimagining look like in the area of community grassroots sport?”

The information presented in the following pages therefore provides some ideas about how we might reflect, reconnect and reimagine community grassroots sport. More specifically, it provides a brief overview of each Summit presentation and documents the ‘calls to action’ offered by each presenter. Under each ‘call’ quotes are provided to provide context for readers who were unable to attend the Summit.

A detailed overview of the Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit schedule, speakers and presentations can be found at: [sparcalberta.com/sport-for-life/sparc-summit](https://sparcalberta.com/sport-for-life/sparc-summit)



# DAY 1

## Sport for Life Keynote Address:

### Providing a Roadmap to Pursue Large Scale Culture Change

Dr. Ibrahim Kendi, Director, Boston University Center for Antiracist Research

Dr. Kendi's Keynote Presentation outlined some of systemic issues causing racial inequities in sport. More specifically, Dr. Kendi used this question-and-answer session to discuss the historical roots of racism in sport, demonstrate how administrative organizations and policy makers do not represent the diverse communities they intend to serve, and discuss some of the ways sport professionals should be advocating for change.

#### DR. KENDI'S CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Engage in processes of self-reflection and accountability</b>	<p><i>"A person can be anti-racist through self-criticism, through growth, through some reflection, through acknowledging the times in which we're being racist."</i></p> <p><i>"We need to recognize that when people say or do something that is racist...and someone else calls them out on it the typical response is to deny...and I actually wanted to show that to be anti-racist to do to something different: It is to actually admit it and acknowledge it so that we can change it."</i></p>
<b>2. Learn about the racisms of the past to understand how they have shaped our present</b>	<p><i>"Historically black people and Native people and Latinx people and other people have been compared to animals...they were considered to be more like animals. And the way that relates to sport is that's how people...are treated, pictured, recruited, where they are positioned, and on and on."</i></p>
<b>3. Recognize that sport is political and advocacy is essential</b>	<p><i>"People who are truly committed to building an equitable and just world are not committed in a performative sense, but are truly committed to what they are willing to advocate for, to push for and articulate...What policies are they advocating for? What policies are they pushing? What policies are they making? What policies are they defending? What policies are they ignoring?"</i></p> <p><i>"Any community can raise the minimum wage significantly, which of course can allow individual people to work less hours and therefore have more time to engage in sport and physical activity. Any community can figure out ways to ensure that their transit system is faster and more effective. Any community can think about how to change zoning laws that would allow for the building of more green space that would allow for more public facilities and fields...these are things that communities can do."</i></p>
<b>4. Lean into fear and discomfort</b>	<p><i>"When people think about changing themselves or changing their organizations or changing policy and practices, one of the things that happens is that people get a little fearful; they start to think, 'what could happen to me if I do this?' And I think that's a valuable thing for people to think about...but I don't think that's the only thing people should consider. I think people should also consider what could happen to them and their community if they don't engage in change making."</i></p>

# SPARC Plenary Address:

## Current State of the Sector

Marco Di Buono, PhD, President, Canadian Tire Jumpstart Charities.

Documenting the findings in Jumpstart's State of Sport Report, Marco Di Buono outlined the post-COVID barriers to sport that remain for Canadian youth and the negative impact of these barriers continue to have on their health and wellbeing. Suggesting that a new value proposition is required within our sporting systems, he used these findings to argue for major changes to our existing policies, process, and structures.

### MARCO DI BUONO'S CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Slow down and build blueprints for change</b>	<p><i>"We need to resist the urge to force change right away. Now is the time to build the blueprints for change."</i></p> <p><i>"Let's use the blueprint as a general guideline of how we want organizations to build back better over time, but give them the flexibility to decide, based on their participants needs, how they build back but give them the tools, resources, and space to actually do it."</i></p>
<b>2. Center the participant, not our organizations</b>	<p><i>"We need to really think about how we are working differently. I know there are some groups that don't really see themselves in the work ARPA is doing. I know there are some who really want to own the sport experience. We don't own the sport experience the participant owns the sport experience."</i></p> <p><i>"What do we envision when we say centering the participant? We don't want to talk about just a sport system, we don't want to talk about recreation as a separate thing, we don't talk about youth organizations on the periphery as a separate thing. If you center the participant we really need to think about all the work that we collectively do meet their needs, wants and expectations, as an eco-system: one that is fluid, symbiotic and inter-dependent. Not one of us owns sport. The participant owns sport. It is for us to work together."</i></p>
<b>3. Ensure social justice and reconciliation are at the heart of the work</b>	<p><i>"How many of you have read, embraced and immersed yourself in order to understand what the calls to action around sport in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action? Indigenous peoples gave us an instruction manual to follow, the least we can do is read and listen to what they are asking as an example."</i></p> <p><i>"The value proposition needs to change. This is about using sport as a tool for social justice."</i></p> <p><i>"If you think it's bad for the general population, it is absolutely despicable what is happening to Black youth, youth of colour, Indigenous youth, girls and women, and 2SLGBTQ + youth in this country, and not to mention the vast number of Canadians with disabilities in this country."</i></p>
<b>4. Utilize resources in a way that serves more members of our communities</b>	<p><i>"Why in a city where basketball is the number one sport by participation, do they insist on keeping hockey rinks operating in summer months – and spring for that matter – when you could easily...convert those into multi-sport facilities for children and youth to enjoy something other than a sport that exhibiting double digit decline year over year?"</i></p> <p><i>"It's not going to solve the problem if we keep throwing money at the governing bodies. That money needs to be reinvested in community sport! Governing bodies need to invest in community sport...we need to think about where we are investing our money in sport today."</i></p>

# SPARC Lunchtime Speaker Series:

## Indigenous Sport Council of Alberta

Jacob Hendy, Executive Director, Indigenous Sports Council of Alberta

Jacob Hendy detailed his path to becoming the Executive Director of the Indigenous Sport Council of Alberta. He also discussed some the challenges and injustices Indigenous sport organizations experience and challenged delegates to actively engage in acts of reconciliation. Suggesting that recreational sporting opportunities are one avenue where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action could be realized, Jacob called for more high quality sporting opportunities (both on and off reserves) capable of supporting the mental and physical well-being of Indigenous children and youth.

JACOB HENDY’S CALLS TO ACTION	
1. Examine the inequitable distribution of funding	<i>“The Alberta Summer Games, the mainstream event that happens every two years, got \$420,000 for the 2023 Games in Okotoks.... It’s a four-day event and it has 27,000 athletes, coaches, and officials...The Alberta Indigenous Games that we started last year had over 37,000 athletes, coaches, and officials...We have to write a grant and hope and plead to get \$75,000. Ours is a yearly event and it’s an eight-day big cultural celebration.”</i>
2. Ensure social justice and reconciliation are at the heart of the work	<i>“That’s part of reconciliation, listening to Indigenous people and being aware of what’s going on.”</i>
3. Learn about the racisms of the past to understand how they have shaped our present	<i>“Indigenous people, despite being 2% of the population, have the highest amount of incarceration rates due to intergenerational trauma from residential schools, the 60s scoop, and the systemic racism they are living through today.”</i>
4. Collaborate with Indigenous-led organizations	<i>“A lot of people wonder what they can do but they don’t really know how to approach Indigenous Communities. But if you have an idea, we are connected to the communities, so come to us if you’re having a hard time connecting.”</i>

# SPARC Plenary Address:

## Positive Youth Development and Current State of Research

Dr. Jessica Fraser-Thomas, Associate Professor, School of Kinesiology and Health Science at York University

Using the most up-to-date research in the area of positive youth development, Dr. Fraser-Thomas outlined how quality sport can be used as a platform for developing the social skills and personal competencies required to thrive throughout life. Challenging the notion that multi-sport participation is inherently better than specialization, she suggested that quality coaching environments and equitable opportunities could have a greater impact on a child's development than simply participating in a multitude of (competitive) activities.

### DR. FRASER-THOMAS' CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Center the participant</b>	<i>"First of all, we need to ask them about their spark. "What's your spark?" And then we need to nudge them towards it. We need to be their champions. We need to support them in pursuing their sparks."</i>
<b>2. Advocate for expanded coach training</b>	<i>"Coaches need to gain different types of knowledge. They need professional knowledge – professional being that sports specific knowledge, sports science, and pedagogical knowledge. They need interpersonal knowledge related to individual and group interactions. So understanding oneself and how one engages and is engaging."</i>
<b>3. Acknowledge the issues with existing sporting systems and promote alternatives</b>	<i>"One of the parents said, "It made me realize just how much you feel like you're tied to this youth sports schedule...And then it stopped and you had a moment to breathe. It was like, 'Oh, maybe we don't need it like that. Maybe we're not into that.'"</i>  <i>"I think it's really important that we do better in prioritizing taking time for outdoor play and physical activity."</i>  <i>"One of the recommendations was intergenerational activities. And this is something we do really poorly at in Canada compared to other nations. Parents drive, we fund, we cheer, we support our children to play, but we don't do this together."</i>
<b>4. Take equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) seriously</b>	<i>"We need to stop navel gazing. We need to be looking at diverse nations, diverse cultures and diverse approaches."</i>  <i>"We really need to make it a priority to do sport for all...We've been saying it forever, but we have to shake it up...We know the pandemic has disproportionately affected equity deserving groups...so we need to do better in this area."</i>  <i>"We need to understand the 26% [of Canadian children who aren't participating]. We don't just need to look at them as a number. We need to give voice and we need to prioritize equity."</i>

# Sport for Life Keynote Address:

## Accomplishing Inclusivity and Community Cohesion

Dorota Blumczynska, CEO, Manitoba Museum; Refugee Advocate

Drawing upon her experiences as a refugee, Dorota Blumczynska discussed the trauma associated with displacement, the impacts of being 'Othered', the importance of belonging. Bringing these personal stories to life, she provided examples of how sport has been a place where individual traumas have been healed and belonging has been realized.

### DOROTA BLUMCZYNSKA'S CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Learn about the racisms and sexism of the past to understand how they have shaped our present</b>	<p><i>"I was a child the first time I was asked, "where are you from?" It's a harmless question perhaps but one that assumes you are from elsewhere, that you don't entirely belong where you are, that you may need to justify your presence and hope for their acceptance.... I had never identified myself by country of origin. Nor had I ever felt the unwelcoming glares of people that felt that I was invading their country. I had never before experienced unkindness related to what I represented."</i></p> <p><i>"I didn't understand the layers of trauma that I carried and how my intersecting identities; being a refugee, being a girl, coming from a socially conservative, religiously conservative family, would define me. Or how all of those identities were highly prescriptive to what I could and could not do in life."</i></p>
<b>2. Ensure social justice is at the heart of the work</b>	<p><i>"We often talk about equality, and equality is everyone getting the same thing. But we aren't all starting from the same place...so the same response will not yield the same opportunities. So it's not about equality...its about justice. Social justice means that we do not tackle this on an individual level but that we remove those barriers for everyone so that the barriers don't exist..."</i></p> <p><i>"Access and opportunity must be given. They are the bare minimum. It is, for community, in fact for society as a whole, to ensure that they are provided because it is a matter of justice and justice demands that every child regardless of economic or other circumstance, has a chance to explore their talent, to take part in enriching activities, to take part in something that connects them to their future possibilities. Whether they are in an after-school program, whether they are in soccer leagues or in hockey programs, community centre programs, baseball and other sports."</i></p> <p><i>"We cannot ask New Canadians to integrate meaningfully...if we aren't willing to fight for the justice to ensure that they don't have to answer the question, where are you from and why are you here?... To extend belonging means to be an active ally against the forces which tend to further their displacement and their Otherness."</i></p>
<b>3. Create meaningful sites of belonging</b>	<p><i>"The journey to belong is not linear...it is complicated and difficult...what it means to belong and to be our complete selves...is to be claimed. To be claimed our communities...belonging is when you are claimed by community, when you are loved...emotion integration, the integration of the spirit and of the heart is not easily done but it can be done when we recognize in one another our kinship and our shared humanity..."</i></p>



# SPARC Plenary Panel:

## Creating Welcoming Spaces for Equity Deserving Groups

- + **Andrea Carey**, Inclusion Incorporated
- + **Rilee ManyBears**, Siksika Health Services
- + **Karen Dommett**, Calgary Adapted Hub
- + **Ruke Okome**, Social Operations/Program Manager  
Free Play for Kids
- + **Kevin Jesus**, Western Canadian Ambassador &  
Regional Board Member You Can Play

Drawing upon her experiences as a refugee, Dorota Blumczynska discussed the trauma associated with displacement, the impacts of being 'Othered', the importance of belonging. Bringing these personal stories to life, she provided examples of how sport has been a place where individual traumas have been healed and belonging has been realized.

### SPARC PLENARY PANEL CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Recognize that little changes can have a big impact</b>	<p><i>"It's the little things that make all the difference. So for example, you walk into a locker room and your coach is standing there and has pride tape on their hockey stick or pride tape on their curling broom. Instantly you're like, "Hey, this is an inclusive place"....Or when discussing a players only event. It's not just 'no wives' or 'no girlfriends,' but also 'no boyfriends.' It's that subtle." – Kevin Jesus</i></p> <p><i>"We start right with the information during the registration processes. What questions are we asking in registration forms? What information is in marketing materials? How are we asking what accommodations a child needs? What social supports are needed?" – Karen Dommett</i></p> <p><i>"Little things really add up. I think that's so crucial for us to think about. What are those small pieces that each of us can do that don't feel like a lot, but actually make a big impact for folks." – Andrea Carey</i></p>
<b>2. Engage in processes of self-reflection and accountability</b>	<p><i>"We need to be on a learning journey in this space right now." – Andrea Carey</i></p> <p><i>"We have to do the work. It's as simple as that...We need to stop being bystanders. We need to be upstanders and we need to stand up when we hear discriminatory rhetoric, when we hear homophobic slurs, any kind of slurs.... So many times I hear the excuse, "It's just locker room talk" or "It's just boys being boys." Well, our English language is so diverse and vast, think of a different word to use." – Kevin Jesus</i></p> <p><i>"Connect with the community and self-reflect. What is your personal role in this? Your organization will not change without your own personal change.... Because as Dr. Jodi Carrington, says "If the big people are not okay, the children don't stand a chance." And that includes every single one of us in this room." – Karen Dommett</i></p>
<b>3. Develop community-led mechanisms</b>	<p><i>"How do we move from doing 'for', to doing 'with', to doing 'by'?" – Andrea Carey</i></p> <p><i>"Ensuring that [participants] lived experience, [participants] voices are also part of the decision-making." – Ruke Okome</i></p> <p><i>"I think we need to be really clear on the roles of individuals with lived experience that we are co-creating with. We need to be creating 'with,' not 'for'...They're the expert in their lived experience." – Karen Dommett</i></p>

## SPARC PLENARY PANEL CALLS TO ACTION

<b>4. Move from transactional relationships to transformative relationships</b>	<p><i>"We need to be taking care of each other in such a different way than we ever have before. We need to be in relationship with each other. We need to show up with a trauma-informed approach every day for every single person because we are all navigating things we've never dealt with before." – Andrea Carey</i></p> <p><i>"Let's communicate. Let's be vulnerable and have those difficult conversations. But let's also understand we're all human. We're not experts all the time. We're going to make mistakes. We're not going to have all the knowledge in the world." – Kevin Jesus</i></p> <p><i>"I think our solutions are rooted in connection and relationship and collaboration...I think the solutions are in front of us but it's going to take a lot of time and relationships and self-reflection and checking in with ourselves." – Karen Dommett</i></p>
<b>5. Learn about the racisms of the past to understand how they have shaped our present</b>	<p><i>"I'm a third generation residential school survivor. My late dad experienced trauma from his parents. My mother experienced trauma from her parents. And so, you know, we're at that phase now in the healing phase. We're trying to move forward...How can Canada respect the virtues and values of Indigenous people in offering their support?" – Riley Many Bears</i></p> <p><i>"We've been in a system that was like literally built on exclusion. Sport was built for a certain population by a certain population. And that has served some very well and many not well at all." – Andrea Carey</i></p>
<b>6. Ensure social justice and reconciliation are at the heart of the work</b>	<p><i>"You know, for First Nations people, we're trying to have access to these infrastructures. It's part of our treaty rights. The government promised us all these infrastructures and yet...I don't want to get too political." – Riley Many Bears</i></p> <p><i>"One of the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to tell stories of Indigenous athletes. And so what you've just described is why that is so important, not just for Indigenous youth to have role models, but also to think about how do we as a general society learn those stories and learn how we can better support Indigenous people." – Andrea Carey</i></p>
<b>7. Recognize that sport is political and advocacy is essential</b>	<p><i>"I think get political and get uncomfortable. We're talking about racism being alive and well in these systems. And we have to really think about that and think about how we start to understand that the roots of white supremacy culture and what that means. We need to start to dig in to those super uncomfortable terms, because if we don't understand them, it's really hard to move forward." – Andrea Carey</i></p> <p><i>"Who here had to develop a COVID policy, a mask policy, or a facility closure at some point in the last two years? Right! So you have the ability to change the way that you do business. Our society in the last two years has adapted...We collectively, as a culture, have figured out how to be different. We can be more inclusive...We can do better." – Karen Dommett</i></p>
<b>8. Utilize resources in a way that serves more members of our communities</b>	<p><i>"Give the money to the organizations that are actually doing the work...All these bigger sporting bodies are getting thousands of dollars. And here we are just begging for change...give us the money to do it. And if we don't do it, take it away. That's fine. That's accountability. But the same should go for the bigger organizations." – Ruke Okome</i></p>



# DAY 2

## SPARC Plenary Address:

### Working Collaboratively: Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative

Beth Devine – Executive Director, Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative

Documenting her journey as the Executive Director of the Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative, Beth Devine provided tangible examples of how a municipal level youth sports commission built and sustained a community grassroots sports movement. More specifically she detailed how the Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative has been able to secure a large membership, outlined the funding models and contracts they have secured, and discussed how they have developed a number of unique partnerships (e.g., school boards, the parks and recreation department). She also discussed the role of research and advocacy as they continue to advance a common agenda.

#### BETH DEVINE'S CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Think local and utilize existing resources</b>	<p><i>"The lack of local programs. The lack of rec level programs. There is no pathway. So you either have to go all in on a travel team at U8 or you might not be able to play at all...There's got to be a better pathway."</i></p> <p><i>"How do we get the city centered around the common agenda of transforming the way we think about and deliver youth sports?...We developed a citywide youth sports commission. We worked with city agencies, professional sports teams, school district leaders, parks and rec leadership, the mayor's administration, the corporate community and the philanthropic community. We brought them to the table to talk about how sports can transform the trajectory of a child. ...We brought everyone around a common agenda...The actionable plan that we came out of that task force with is now our blue print for our work. It's what we think about everyday."</i></p> <p><i>"I had a list of 30 organizations. I went out and met with every one of them to get to know their work. What do they do? Where are they working? Are they school based or rec centre based? Everything. We made this big grid. What was their annual income? Who are their funders?"</i></p>
<b>2. Advocate for expanded coach training</b>	<p><i>"We developed a comprehensive coach certification course. It's a non-credit certification course that exists at Temple University."</i></p>
<b>3. Conduct and utilize research</b>	<p><i>"Putting together a citywide assessment of youth sport in the city. If we don't know what the situation is in the city we don't know where to increase things. That's something that is funded."</i></p> <p><i>"Research is important. Sometimes we lean into the research that is being done by others."</i></p>

## BETH DEVINE'S CALLS TO ACTION

### 4. Recognize that sport is political and advocacy is essential

*"Using all this information [research] the goal is to drive favourable public policy. I mean that's the name of the game. We want to make sure we are making change at the city level so all kids have access. Any kid that wants to play should be able to play right in their own neighbourhood."*

*"There is a need for advocacy. We met with city council, state legislators; we hired a lobbyist at one point. And we showed everyone what we were doing in their districts. That opened eyes. Everything goes back to your members. It helps tell the story."*

### 5. Utilize resources in a way that serves more members of our communities

*"Give the money to the organizations that are actually doing the work...All these bigger sporting bodies are getting thousands of dollars. And here we are just begging for change...give us the money to do it. And if we don't do it, take it away. That's fine. That's accountability. But the same should go for the bigger organizations." – Ruke Okome*



# Sport for Life Keynote Address:

## Implementing the Long-Term Development in Sport And Physical Activity Framework

Glenn and Nick Hoag – Olympic and Professional Volleyball Coach/Player

This father-son duo shared first hand experience of implementing the Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity framework into their volleyball careers. Discussing their collective experiences as coaches and players, Glenn and Nick Hoag walked us through their sporting journey; beginning with the earliest years of Nick's childhood and ending with the impact COVID-19 has had on high-performance volleyball.

### DOROTA BLUMCZYNSKA'S CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Make fun a guiding principle</b>	<p><i>"The important thing for us was that the boys would build the physical literacy that they needed to be able to enjoy sport and have fun doing it." – Glenn</i></p> <p><i>"I was basically born playing sports. For me, it was always a lot of fun and it was a way to connect with friends and meet new people. I never pictured myself becoming a professional player of any sport... I was just to kind of being active and enjoying my time. It was a lot of fun." – Nick</i></p> <p><i>"So the fun aspect was always there and that's, I think, what kept me going this whole time." – Nick</i></p>
<b>2. Engage in processes of self-reflection and accountability</b>	<p><i>"School based sport is, in my opinion, one of the strongest part of the Canadian sport culture." – Glenn</i></p> <p><i>"[In Paris] they have a structure where [kids] have two weeks off every six weeks of school...And this is all based on cultural or sport activities. They have camps during this time. So we would go on to a camp." – Nick</i></p>
<b>3. Emphasize exploration and unstructured play</b>	<p><i>"One thing that I noticed they did a lot in Paris with the coaching, is they that formal training, but then there was a part of training where you could just explore things." – Glenn Hoag</i></p>

# SPARC Plenary Address:

## The Path Forward

Tom Farrey – Executive Director, Aspen Institute’s Sports and Society Program

Suggesting that we are entering a new phase of youth sport, Tom Farrey discussed the importance of building inclusive sporting systems using examples from The Aspen Institute’s Project Play. More specifically, he discussed the importance of centering the participant (i.e., asking kids what they want), revitalizing in-town leagues, and developing quality training frameworks for all coaches.

### TOM FARREY’S CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Take equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) seriously</b>	<i>“I would argue...the first phase of youth sport was innovation, the second was investment, and the third was incentives. Now the fourth should be the era of inclusion. Inclusion, broadly defined is where sport helps unleash the potential of all children, both the athletic and the human potential of all children, regardless of background or ability.”</i>
<b>2. Center the participant</b>	<i>“Ask kids what they want...really putting them at the center of the experience. Because youth sport is really, it’s designed by adults for adults – if we’re really being honest with ourselves.”</i>  <i>“We don’t really know what we’re doing often in youth sports because we don’t have kids sitting at our boards or board meetings ...we just sort of do what we think is probably the right thing. But we’re guessing and then we wonder why the attrition rates are really high.”</i>  <i>“So the key is really kind of know exactly why kids are playing sports. What are they playing? What do they want to play? What’s keeping them from playing? And putting that data at the center of the design of our policies and everything we do.”</i>
<b>3. Think local and utilize existing resources</b>	<i>“Think small means using the available play spaces that you have in your community more creatively, partnering with schools and parks and rec. You know, making sure whatever’s out there is being used as efficiently as possible. But also thinking about new ways to use certain spaces, particularly in urban areas.”</i>  <i>“Revitalizing in-town leagues, which is really just a call toward community-based local play...This can be done. This might seem like a yesterday idea, but it’s not.”</i>  <i>“Instead of relying on parents to coach the entry-level teams, they went out to the high schools and recruited kids...to coach the six year olds.”</i>  <i>“We’re going to start by getting all of our key organizations around the table. We’re going to educate them, we’re going to help them reflect on what they’re already good at, and then we’re going to give them resources so they can get better.”</i>



## TOM FARREY'S CALLS TO ACTION

### 4. Advocate for expanded coach training

*"Training all coaches...Coaches are the delivery, the vehicles for these different experiences for kids. Are they trained in basic sports specific skills? Do they know how to set up a practice? Do they have general youth coaching philosophy concepts? Do they understand what the goal is? Is it to win the game on Saturday or the championship this year, or is it to make an athlete for life? How do you do that? Do they understand basic concepts in athlete development?"*

*"Designing for development, which means use anchoring your sports system or ecosystem and the principles of age appropriate play or developmentally appropriate play. This requires training our coaches."*

## SPARC Lunch Speaker Series:

### Sport Calgary's All Sport Event Series

Sandra Paire, Vice President, Membership & Business Administration Sport Calgary

Emphasizing the need to reduce barriers to participation, Sandra Paire detailed the ways Sport Calgary has been successful in advocating for the benefits of sport, working with the local government to enhance facility development and utilization, and helping sport organizations with funding, governance and developing their public profile. Detailing the specifics of Sport Calgary's All Sport Event series, she provided tangible examples of how organizations can actively contribute to each of the aforementioned activities.

## TOM FARREY'S CALLS TO ACTION

### 1. Center the participant

*"It is important to keep the participant at the center of all decisions we make when we plan and execute the event. It is crucial for us to ensure a positive first experience for the participants."*

### 2. Think local and utilize existing resources

*"The schedule is built around the needs and preferences of the sport providers. Sport Calgary work with Sport Facilities and allocated sport field and gyms to sport providers that would otherwise pay a rental fee to run sessions."*

*"Sport Calgary leads the event planning, working collaboratively with all sport partners. We take on the scheduling, the space allocation, the registration system, the signage, the promotion, the check-in process on the day of the event, the communication with the participants, and the cost...We also take the lead on the promotion and provide partners with marketing kit with printed material as well as digital material for social media engagement, limiting the amount of time and money our partners need to invest in the promotion of their sports."*

### 3. Recognize that sport is political and advocacy is essential

*"In everything we do we need to advocate for the sport sector. Making sure that sport becomes a priority...it's great if there is 80 million invested in sport but if it goes into areas where there is no impact that's useless. Make sports a priority in everything that you advocate for."*

# Sport for Life Keynote Address:

## Sport, Social Connection, and Self-Empowerment

Aisha Saintiche – Certified Health Coach; Speaker; Author

Drawing on her experience as a certified health coach, Aisha Saintiche challenged all delegates to embrace the theme “Reflect, Reconnect, and Reimagine.” Emphasizing the need to move beyond the ‘status quo,’ she discussed the importance of engaging in processes of deep reflection, embracing the notion of (un)learning, and leaning into our fears and discomforts.

### AISHA SAINTICHE’S CALLS TO ACTION

<b>1. Engage in processes of self-reflection and accountability</b>	<p><i>“Get comfortable with the idea of unlearning. Now when I say unlearning...I don’t mean that we take the things that we have always done and explore ways to refine them or make small tweaks, expecting significant shifts in the outcomes....[this approach] has the tendency to keep us comfortable...stifle innovation and risk, while also creating continued barriers for engagement. The art of unlearning means identifying those things, words, places, mindsets and outcomes...those that reinforce the status quo.”</i></p> <p><i>“The first thing you need to do is make a commitment...I’m not talking about the organizational declaration of this work. I’m talking about the individual commitment that each and every one of you must make to be successful in creating, promoting, and supporting change.”</i></p>
<b>2. Create meaningful sites of belonging</b>	<p><i>“Social connection need not always be governed by rules and practices and procedures and fully identified roles....Addressing issues of mental health, equity, diversity and inclusion, isn’t just about the systems and structures. It’s also about that sense of belonging, that sense of welcoming that can only be achieved when we converse.”</i></p>
<b>3. Develop community-led mechanisms</b>	<p><i>“Communities know when they are not being engaged in an authentic way...We seek a new outcome but from an unchanged system or from a minor refinement in existing processes. If we desire to expand our reach and connect with communities...then the only thing we can bank on is authentic engagement.”</i></p> <p><i>“Our role as a catalyst for change isn’t to tell communities about the importance of sport. It is to create a shared understanding and vision with the community by which the sport is the enabler.”</i></p>
<b>4. Lean into fear and discomfort</b>	<p><i>“If what we’ve done in the past has not resulted in the change we want to see then why don’t we throw caution, fear, and apprehension to the wind and step into the unknown... don’t let the structure and the process be the barrier to what your sport can really do for communities.”</i></p> <p><i>“What I’m asking of you today is to take empowered action...you can’t make slight changes. You can’t minimally engage in dialogue. You can’t have a partial uncomfortable conversation. This work requires your full commitment.”</i></p> <p><i>“We must recognize that the way are doing business, engaging with communities, creating partnerships, or marketing our sports may no longer be serving us. No one wants to start from scratch, but what it that is what’s required? What if it’s the only way we can reconnect, reimagine and re-establish our sports as sites for everyone requires a complete overhaul?”</i></p>

# SECTION TWO:

**DELEGATES' INSIGHTS: AN OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK FROM  
FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS**

# FACILITATED DISCUSSIONS

In addition to hearing from a number of researchers, practitioners, policy makers and political leaders, the Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit provided delegates from around the province with an opportunity to share their experiences and insights about the past, present, and future of community grassroots sport in Alberta.

Throughout the Summit, delegates participated in a series of facilitated conversations. During each conversation, groups were asked to reflect on the information presented by keynote and plenary speakers, connect this information to their own experiences, and share their responses to a series of predetermined questions. The questions were:

## Facilitated Conversation #1:

- + What is your perspective on the state of the current youth sport system?
  - + What are the strengths? What is working?
  - + What are the weaknesses? What is broken?
- + What does a quality sport experience look like and feel like for children

## Facilitated Conversation #2:

- + What tensions exist regarding Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in sport?
- + How are we reproducing or perpetuating exclusionary practices? How is the current system complicit in this?
- + What futures do you imagine for the youth sport system when it comes to inclusion? (What will look different in our programs? In the sector/system?)
- + What are some specific tools, techniques, approaches to achieve this?

## Facilitated Conversation #3:

- + What could the future landscape for children and youth community grassroots sport look and feel like in Alberta?
- + What steps need to be taken to shape the new landscape for youth sport in Alberta? How do we work collaboratively to ensure this gets done?
- + What principles need to guide our work to enhance the future sport & recreation systems?



Individuals who attended the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association's (ARPA) Leadership Summit were also asked to respond to two questions about the future of community grassroots sports in Alberta after watching videos of two plenary addresses:

### 1. Current State of the Sector

**Marco Di Buono**, President, Canadian Tire  
Jumpstart Charities

### 2. The Path Forward

**Tom Farrey** – Executive Director, Aspen Institute's  
Sport and Society Program

The questions they were asked to respond to were:

1. During the Sport for Life/SPARC Summit, it was suggested that a transformation of grassroots sport might be required. If this is the case, and we have a blank slate to work from, what do we want to create? How might the existing systems and processes be completely reimaged?
2. Communities/people know when they aren't being authentically engaged. What are some ways we could meaningfully engage with diverse communities as we reimagine grassroots sport?





# SECTION OVERVIEW

The information presented in the following pages provides a summary of the feedback received throughout the various discussions. A total of 66 pages of notes were collected from the facilitated conversations at both the Sport for Life/SPARC Summit and ARPA's Leadership Summit. Using thematic content analysis, data from the notes were coded, categorized, and synthesized into themes.

Organized around these themes, the information presented in this section provides some ideas about how we might reimagine community grassroots sport. More specifically, it outlines eight tangible actions that will be required to improve the landscape of grassroots recreational sport across the province. Within each action, a few relevant quotes are provided. A detailed overview of all the data can be found on the SPARC Alberta website

– [sparcalberta.com](https://sparcalberta.com)



## ACTION #1

### Define quality, community grassroots sporting experiences

When discussing the requirements for quality, community grassroots sporting experiences, delegates outlined four criteria:

1. Quality grassroots sporting experiences must be accessible (physically and financially).
2. Quality grassroots sporting experiences must prioritize belonging, fun, and development over winning, travel and elitism.
3. Quality grassroots sporting experiences must be co-developed with children and youth.
4. Quality grassroots programs must be compatible, but separate from, our existing competitive sporting programs.

And while these four criteria are by no means exhaustive, they should be used as a starting point for defining the types of programs that will be included in this community grassroots sporting movement.

## Be Accessible

Improved access to facilities – more affordable, equitable, open availability (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Needs to be financially accessible to all stakeholders (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

## Prioritize fun, belonging, and development over winning, travel, & elitism:

Flip the sport system. Focus on participation and skill development and fun (*Leaders Summit*)

Fun, participant centered, autonomy, choice, belonging (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Move away from competition to development (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

## Be co-developed with children & youth:

Asking the kids what they want, youth voice in the organizations (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Participant-centered – what do kids want? (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Giving participants choice and autonomy (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

## Be compatible with, but separate from, our existing competitive sporting programs:

Develop pathways for both competitive and recreational growth (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Inclusion doesn't need to take away from anything else. Both grassroots and competitive sport can co-exist (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

# LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

## SPORT FOR GOOD NEW ORLEANS

Sport for Good New Orleans was formed in 2014 to develop coordination among stakeholders and community leaders to improve universal access to sport-based youth development programs. Made possible through a 4 million dollar investment from Laureus USA, the program supports local leaders capable of unleashing the power of sport directly in schools. The programs four impacts areas are education, equity of access, health and wellbeing, and inclusive governance.

To learn more about Sport for Good visit: [laureus-usa.ec2stage.net/our-work/sport-for-good-cities/sport-for-good-orleans/](http://laureus-usa.ec2stage.net/our-work/sport-for-good-cities/sport-for-good-orleans/)

## GAME ON PHILLY REPORT

The Game on Philly Report defines detailed recommendations around Access, Quality, Engagement, Research and Resources. Developed by the Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative, it is intended to serve as blueprint for programmatic and advocacy efforts.

To learn more about Game On Philly:

[pysc.org/initiatives/game-on-philly-the-citywide-task-force-on-sbyd/](http://pysc.org/initiatives/game-on-philly-the-citywide-task-force-on-sbyd/)

## ACTION #2

### Develop a long-term, vision for community grassroots sport in Alberta

Recognizing that change takes time, delegates felt it was necessary to develop a long-term vision for community grassroots sport in Alberta. The purpose of this long-term vision was fivefold:

#### Offer A New Vision/ Philosophy

Challenge groups to do better (*e.g., setting social goals*).  
(*Leaders Summit*)

Develop a new philosophy (*Leaders Summit*)

#### What Is Meant By Community Grassroots Sport

Need clear definition of what grassroots sport is  
(*Leaders Summit*)

Define recreation better (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

#### Clearly Identify Outcomes

Need clear consistent framework with measurable outcomes. How do we measure the human experience?  
(*Facilitated conversation #3*)

Identify outcome measures so we can report on data points (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

#### Account For Urban & Rural Differences

Rural/Urban equity – how can we encourage success in rural areas too (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

Need to recognize differences between big cities versus rural/small municipalities (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

#### Outline a Process for Securing Appropriate Resources

Leaders need to sit down and decide how to better distribute funds (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Who gets money? Grassroots versus high performance (*Facilitated conversation #2*)

How are professional sports organizations paying back? (*Facilitated conversation #2*)

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

### CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN SPORT

Developed and adopted by the supreme governing body for organised sport in Norway, Children's Rights in Sport provides recommendations on how to develop positive sporting activities for children up to 12 years of age. The document outlines seven rights:

1. Safety
2. Friendship and enjoyment
3. Competency
4. Influence
5. The freedom to choose
6. Competitions for all
7. On the children's terms

To learn more about Norway's Children's Bill of Rights in Sport visit:

[idrettsforbundet.no/contentassets/482e66e842fa4979902ecc77f0c05263/36\\_17\\_barneidrettsbestemmelsene\\_eng.pdf](https://idrettsforbundet.no/contentassets/482e66e842fa4979902ecc77f0c05263/36_17_barneidrettsbestemmelsene_eng.pdf)



## ACTION #3

### Develop new mechanisms to authentically engage with communities

The need to listen to communities when developing grassroots sporting experiences was shared by the majority of delegates. It was therefore suggested that new mechanisms be developed to authentically engage with equity-denied groups (including children and youth), utilize diverse leaders, and embrace the notion of “nothing about us, without us.”

#### Provide Opportunities To Listen To Equity-Denied Groups

People aren't listened to. We need to listen to what they want  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

Need to engage with groups with lived experiences to understand what they need  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

#### Utilize Diverse Leaders

Leverage community leaders  
(Leaders Summit)

Ambassadors to connect with youth in a less formal way  
(Facilitated Conversation #2)

#### Embrace the Notion of “Nothing About Us, Without Us”

Fix with not for (Leaders Summit)

Not top down directive, listening to the intended audience  
(facilitated conversation #2)

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

### SPORT ENGLAND'S PEOPLE AND PLACES

A project of Sport England, the People and Places project was launched in 12 communities across England. Moving away from a top-down approach to project development, Sport England developed a community-led approach that was guided by six principles:

1. People own what they help create
2. Real change happens in real work
3. Those who do the work, do the change
4. Connect the system to more of itself
5. Start anywhere, follow everywhere
6. The process you use to get to the future you get.

To learn more about the People and Places project visit:

[www.sportengland.org/blogs/people-and-places-introduction-our-story](http://www.sportengland.org/blogs/people-and-places-introduction-our-story)



# ACTION #4

## Leverage local infrastructure

While the need for new, innovative approaches was commonly discussed, many delegates felt that much of the required infrastructure already existed at the local level. Therefore, rather than focusing on developing new spaces it was suggested we reexamine how we are using the spaces we already have. More specifically, it was suggested we begin to utilize schools through programs like intramurals and non-cut sports teams. It was also suggested that public spaces such as parks and streets could be used in more creative ways.

The need to reexamine how we use our municipal recreation facilities was also commonly discussed. The three areas that delegates felt should be examined included:

- 1. Facility allocation** (What sports get to utilize the space?)
- 2. Cost** (How much are we charging to use the space?)
- 3. Program categories** (Can we rethink age, gender, and ability categories?)

## Utilize Schools

Shift focus to afterschool in schools  
(Facilitated Conversation #3)

Get into schools (Leaders Summit)

## Examine fees at municipal facilities

Because the municipal focus is on the bottom line change is challenging (facilitated conversation #2)

Reduced financial barriers to facility rentals for youth programming/ rec (Facilitated conversation #3)

## Rethink processes for facility allocation

Leverage post pandemic opportunities to redefine allocation and user priority (maybe less hockey and more play) (Leaders Summit)

Municipalities can change allocations  
(facilitated conversation #2)

## Rethink age, gender and ability categories

Mixed gender programming  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

Full family participation (Facilitated Conversation #1)

Gender/Flex groupings to allow more participation  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

## Innovative use of public spaces

Innovative use of space (e.g., block parties, let youth create their own spaces) (Leaders Summit)

Know how to utilize space to encourage more sport participation (facilitated conversation #2)

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

### SPORTFIT NEW ZEALAND

SportFit is a school-based initiative funded equally by the school and the Hillary Commission. The sole purpose is to provide funding to employee qualified leaders to help further develop and support the school sports program. The overall goal is to ensure that more students had greater opportunities for experiencing a number of school-based sports in a range of contexts.

For more information about SportFit New Zealand visit:  
[funding4sport.co.uk/downloads/sport\\_recreation\\_manual.pdf](https://funding4sport.co.uk/downloads/sport_recreation_manual.pdf)

## ACTION #5

### Utilize new and existing partnerships

Diverse partnerships were considered to be an essential element for any groups working to improve the landscape of community grassroots sport across the province. The need to rethink collaboration within the sector was the area that was most commonly discussed. Specifically, it was suggested that there was a need to stop competing with one another and begin to share resources and ideas. It was also suggested that corporate partners and partners from outside sport and recreation (e.g., health and education) would be necessary to advance any new vision for community grassroots sport.

Youth were another group that delegates thought should be partners in this process. Recognizing the need for more coaches and leaders, it was suggested that youth could be given school credit for coaching younger kids, while simultaneously governing and running their own sport and recreation experiences.

### Rethink collaboration within the sector

Need to (re)engage the entire sector (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Need to stop fighting amongst ourselves (*facilitated conversation #2*)

Rec and sport can work together. Partnerships must exist (*Facilitated conversation #3*)

### Engage with corporate partners

Some good corporate partners to support programs, equipment, etc. (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

Find out where the money is and engage (*Facilitated conversation #2*)

### Engage with other sectors

Needs cross-sectional representation (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

Wellness and health need to be seen as part of sport (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

Look outside the sector (*Facilitated Conversation #3*)

### Treat youth as partners

Get young people engaged through volunteer coaching (*Leaders Summit*)

Athlete to volunteer (giving back) by still being involved with sport as they age and becoming a volunteer/coach. (*Facilitated Conversation #1*)

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

### THE SCHOOL SPORT PARTNERSHIP

The School Sport Partnership encourages schools and community sports providers to work in partnership. Each year the School Sport Coordinators work with sport providers to offer their cluster of schools with a range of participation and competitive opportunities. The partnership also offers teachers a selection of training courses, whole school training, one to one support and guidance, school resources, coaching in schools and additional events for both pupils and staff.

To learn more about The School Sport Partnership visit:

<https://www.thessp.org.uk/about-us>

## ACTION #6

### Take Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Seriously

The need to provide meaningful opportunities for equity-denied groups was a theme that was emphasized throughout the Summit. Recognizing the ways colonization and racism have shaped our sporting systems, delegates called for diversity in leadership positions (e.g., hiring equity-denied folks to run organizations, coach, and sit on boards). They also stressed the importance of having equity, diversity, and inclusivity as guiding principles for all programming across the sport and recreation system.

#### Ensure diversity in leadership positions

*(though equitable processes not tokenistic processes)*

More representation in coaching, leadership “see it to be it” *(facilitated conversation #2)*

White influenced industry, we need more opportunities to ensure diversity at higher tables *(facilitated conversation #2)*

System representation – people of color in positions of power *(facilitated conversation #2)*

#### Make equity, diversity and inclusion guiding principles for all programs

Our system is working only for white people  
*(Facilitated Conversation #1)*

Is it safe for all bodies? Coaches don’t have knowledge or sometimes the willingness to be adaptive and/or inclusive. *(Facilitated Conversation #1)*

All sports should create diversity/inclusion policies  
*(Facilitated conversation #2)*

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

### DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN SPORT DISCUSSION SERIES

A partnership between KidSport Calgary, KidSport Edmonton, KidSport Alberta, Sport Calgary and the Edmonton Sport Council, this nine-part discussion series is intended to advance awareness and discussion around diversity and inclusion in sport. Each session is intended to target club leaders who are well-positioned to implement positive change.

To learn more about the Diversity & Inclusion Discussion Series visit:

[kidsportcanada.ca/alberta/diversity-inclusion/](https://kidsportcanada.ca/alberta/diversity-inclusion/)





## ACTION #7

### Develop mechanisms for capacity building and training

The need for education and training was considered an essential element of delivering quality sports development programming. There were five categories of training that were discussed:

- 1. Coach training** – It was suggested that a centralized, accessible coach certification program would be a worthwhile investment. Topics that could be included were child and youth development, EDI and safe sport, concussion safety, and trauma informed practice.
- 2. Elected official training** – It was suggested that if elected officials had a better understanding of the benefits of community grassroots sports, they would be more likely to make policy decisions that would increase access.
- 3. Practitioner reflection** – The need to create spaces to reflect (at both an individual and a societal level) on the historical injustices and learn about reconciliation and EDI was seen as an essential element of training and education.
- 4. Training in non-profit basics** – It was suggested that local sporting organizations would benefit from training in non-profit management (e.g., HR, social media, grant writing)
- 5. Other capacity building supports as they arise** – Other supports that were thought to be beneficial included parent training, processes for policy development, and the development of coach and organizational directories.



## Centralized, accessible coach certification

More accessible training for coaches and officials  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

Volunteers must be trained to deliver quality and safe sport. (Facilitated Conversation #1)

Trauma informed coaching (reach out to experts from other industries) (Facilitated Conversation #3)

## Spaces to reflect on historical injustices / reconciliation

People want to engage in EDI but do not know how to do it. Need resources and training (Facilitated conversation #2)

Use TRC calls to action as a start (Leaders Summit)

Nobody is asking about the history. Need to learn and acknowledge our harmful history  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

Self-reflection needs to be part of the education  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

## Elected official training

Update elected officials' course (Leaders Summit)

Education! At every level (parents, coaches, participants, municipal officials) (facilitated conversation #2)

## Training in non-profit basics

Lack of knowledge about running organizations  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

Training for grant writing or have a professional available to help orgs (Facilitated conversation #3)

Social media training/ discussions on how to deal with the public realm (Facilitated conversation #3)

## Other capacity building supports as they arise

Parent education needs to continue to grow  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

Tangible policy for on the ground workers  
(Facilitated Conversation #3)

Directory of organizations / database  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

# LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

## THE EDMONTON CHAMBER OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS

The Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations provides its members with a broad range of resources, networking, and skill development opportunities. They do this through eight interrelated activities:

1. Provide the sector with efficient 'sense-making' by curating, distilling, and distributing meaningful information.
2. Create opportunities for progressive dialogue by convening stakeholders for targeted, systems-level conversations that advance the sector's impact.
3. Connect the sector with larger discussions by providing leadership within regional, provincial and national networks.
4. Strengthen sector leadership and governance capacity by providing timely council and (information on) educational programs.
5. Enable the sector to leverage shared resources by fostering connectivity and collaboration.
6. Encourage volunteerism so that the sector has a rich repository of human capital to draw upon.
7. Support the sector to amplify many unified voices by engaging with stakeholders to develop key messages.
8. Represent the sector by directly and strategically advocating on selected areas of importance.

To learn more about ECVO visit: <https://ecvo.ca/about/>

## ACTION #8

### Support, share, and promote research

The need to ensure decisions are guided by research was discussed by some delegates. The specific activities that delegates thought would be useful in this area were gathering relevant data, sharing the findings of this data through a series of knowledge translation activities, and researching and sharing existing/promising practices with local groups.

Delegates also stressed the need to develop mechanisms to effectively communicate the value of sport and recreation and begin to position sport participation as part of a broader project that is connected to a number of other (seemingly unconnected) policy areas such as minimum wage and childcare.

#### Gather data (qualitative and quantitative)

Getting the data to drive change to show the importance of sport to those who don't understand  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

Lack of qualitative and quantitative data  
(Leaders Summit)

Gathering feedback from users. Rec survey for EDI  
(Facilitated conversation #2)

#### Research and share existing/ promising practices

Look to best practices – don't reinvent the wheel  
(Facilitated conversation #3)

Looking outside the sector (Facilitated conversation #3)

Don't need to reinvent the wheel if there are already people doing good work  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

#### Develop ongoing mechanisms for knowledge translation

Accessing the research – Finding out how to translate knowledge (Facilitated conversation #2)

More round tables, both locally and provincially  
(Facilitated Conversation #3)

More touch points through the year to connect and tell stories (Facilitated Conversation #3)

#### Communicate the value of sport in the broader political context

We are in a crisis. We need stronger advocates. We need to communicate the value of sport  
(Facilitated Conversation #1)

Need ministry of sports provincially and nationally to fight for groups/have a voice (Facilitated Conversation #1)

Active lobby program. Physical activity is part of a "health" care system (Facilitated conversation #3)

## LEARNING FROM SUCCESS

### THE SPORT MATTERS GROUP

The Sport Matters Group was an unincorporated 'unorganization' that pursues a broad range of advocacy, research and partnership-building initiatives. Funded by a group of 40 national sporting bodies, the group embraced an "intuitive, messy, chaotic, discordant view of how the world works; more like an underground New York artists collective willing look outward through a different set of eyes and less like a community of purpose with a destination in mind."

For more information about the Sport Matters Group visit:

[maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Rdg2-SMG-Unorganization-P-Jurbala-1.pdf](http://maytree.com/wp-content/uploads/Rdg2-SMG-Unorganization-P-Jurbala-1.pdf)

# SECTION THREE:

## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The Sport for Life/SPARC Alberta Summit has brought us one step closer to creating new futures for community grassroots sport in cities and towns across Alberta. Using the information throughout this document, we hope to take the next steps in this collaborative journey.

If you are interested in joining us as we continue to (re)imagine community grassroots sport, we encourage you to visit the SPARC Alberta ([www.sparcalberta.com](http://www.sparcalberta.com)) website to provide feedback on the calls to action in this report. The survey will be open until December 16th, 2023. We also invite you to follow us on social media, share this report with your colleagues, friends, and community members. But most importantly commit to working with us for a future where all children and youth have access to quality sport and recreation environments that foster equity, diversity, inclusion in their own communities

In the winter of 2023, SPARC Alberta will also be hosting a Leaders Roundtable. The purpose of this round table will be to bring decision-makers and funders together to begin to build new forms and methods of leadership, decision-making and resource distribution. We look forward to actions and commitments from across the SPAR sector and beyond. As Heather Cowie (SPARC Alberta Chair and President of the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association) has noted,

*“Sport has the power to shape confident, resilient, empathic leaders of tomorrow, but it doesn’t just happen. We need to work together to ensure that all children and youth in Alberta have access to quality sport for development opportunities. There has never been a greater need than in this moment, we have an opportunity to collaborate, learn, and be stronger than ever.”*

It is therefore our hope that the sport and recreation professionals use the information in this document we work to develop and deliver community grassroots sporting opportunities in cities and towns across the province.





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