



I·SPARC

Move | Play | Compete

Indigenous Sport,
Physical Activity &
Recreation Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2025|26

19,761 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

2025|26

22
PROGRAMS

832
EVENTS

1,720
GRANTS
AWARDED

13
PROVINCIAL ATHLETE
DEVELOPMENT CAMPS
& CHAMPIONSHIPS

514
PARTNER COMMUNITIES,
SCHOOLS &
ORGANIZATIONS

1,062
RISE GRANTS
AWARDED

202
YOUTH SPORT
DEVELOPMENT
CAMPS

7,303
YOUTH SPORT
DEVELOPMENT
PARTICIPANTS

209
HEALTHY LIVING
COMMUNITY PROJECTS

1,000+
TRAINED LEADERS,
FACILITATORS, COACHES
& OFFICIALS

FORGING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

DEEPENING CONNECTIONS AND RESTORING TRADITIONS

Since 2009, the Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council (I-SPARC) has been dedicated to making participation in sport, physical activity, recreation, and healthy living a priority for Indigenous youth and communities.

In 2025/26, I-SPARC continued to forge new relationships and solidify existing collaborations, while adapting and expanding existing programs to ensure they continue to engage and inspire.

The Indigenous-led Food Systems Program (FSP) has had a very successful year. The programs focused on food security and a return to land-based traditions have been evolving and growing in response to community interests. The second cohort of the Tobacco Cessation Program had positive participant outcomes and the redesign of FitNation, one of the Healthy Living initiative's most popular programs, to an outdoor model of healing through movement was delivered to the newest group of leaders to take back to their communities.

The Community Sport Development programming has flourished this year and existing partnerships within the mainstream and Indigenous sport systems were strengthened. Relationships with professional sport organizations continue to expand, including an exciting new collaboration with the Vancouver Canucks. The second annual *Pathways: Indigenous Sport Leadership Gatherings*, delivered in partnership and collaboration with the BC Regional Sport Alliance, were a resounding success.

The women's team made history at the 2025 National Aboriginal Hockey Championships (NAHC) with their first silver medal. That win marked the eleventh year in a row that Team BC has had a podium finish. Elite athletes Shalaya Valenzuela and Fynn McCarthy were awarded the second-annual I-SPARC Athlete of the Year award. For over a decade now, the Premier's Awards for Indigenous Youth Excellence in Sport

has been recognizing Indigenous athletes who achieved excellence in performance sport and demonstrated a commitment to their education, culture, and promoting healthy and active lifestyles.

In 2025/26, with a focus on continued engagement with the sport organizations across the province and the creation of programming that supports Indigenous youth and their communities form deeper connections to the land and traditional practices, I-SPARC delivered a total of 832 events involving 19,761 participants, in partnership with over 500 communities, schools, and organizations.



“ My heart is full and it [Regional Leader Training] was beyond expectations. I am so grateful for these days. Thank you.

WHAT IS I-SPARC?

The Indigenous Sport, Physical Activity & Recreation Council (I-SPARC) was established as a social legacy of Cowichan 2008 NAIG with the primary goal of improving the health outcomes of Indigenous peoples by supporting and encouraging physically active individuals, families, and communities. The robust and responsive programs and services delivered by I-SPARC are designed to build capacity and increase access to sport, recreation, and physical activity in First Nations communities, Métis Chartered Communities, Aboriginal Friendship Centres, schools, and other delivery agencies throughout the province.

Nearly two decades later, I-SPARC is a thriving provincial organization committed not only to advancing the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples but also to creating safe, inclusive, and respectful environments where all individuals can participate in sport, physical activity, recreation, and wellness programs without fear of harm or discrimination.



THE STRATEGY

I-SPARC's Provincial Strategy, based on four Pillars, is a long-term road map for the creation of programs that together have a transformative impact on the health and well-being of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities throughout BC.

THE FOUR PILLARS

- 1 **Healthy Living** | Self-Empowerment
- 2 **Sport** | Strengthening Pathways
- 3 **Engagement** | Inspiring Participation
- 4 **Sustainability** | Building Capacity



FOOD SOVEREIGNTY & SECURITY

DEEP CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND



“ The most meaningful outcome of this project has been the unexpected reversal in how knowledge is moving through the community. Not everyone in Ahousaht has been taught how to preserve salmon, even in a fishing community. This project bridged some of that gap. Because the infrastructure is at the school, children are learning preparation skills there and bringing them home. They are now teaching their own families.

Elders, seeing this activity, have become excited to share their stories. The flow of knowledge has gone in directions we did not necessarily plan: child to parent, school to household, action to story. That is a small but genuine change in how food knowledge moves in our community.

Grant recipient from Ahousaht community
Food Systems Program

REVITALIZING TRADITIONS

For thousands of years, First Peoples' food practices have been based on a deep connection to the land and the seasons.

Reclaiming and revitalizing these traditions is a vital part of developing food security in modern Indigenous homes and communities. I-SPARC's Food Systems Program (FSP) empowers individuals and the BC communities they live in to achieve their distinct food sovereignty goals.

This year, the program reached new heights. Community-driven projects now include not only the growing of medicinal gardens and knowledge-sharing about land-based diets and food preservation methods but also initiatives such as the restoration of clam gardens and focus groups for discussing climate change mitigation strategies.

For the first time, in collaboration with the respective communities, I-SPARC delivered in-person regional gatherings in the Northern, Interior, and Vancouver Island regions, allowing for the on-the-ground community projects in Stelat'en First Nation, ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation, and the Island Indigenous Foods Gathering to be showcased. Gatherings focused on networking, peer-to-peer connection, and regional knowledge exchange.

The funding FSP provides through their multi-tiered grant system increased, allowing more communities to start, improve, or sustain their food-related projects. During I-SPARC's annual regional leader training, FSP's programs and initiatives were showcased through engaging "Food Is Medicine" workshops that included live cooking demos and recipe creation. Educational webinars on topics ranging from preparing grant proposals, to operating mobile slaughterhouse units, and to the mental, spiritual, and ancestral component of nutritional health were created and are now accessible via I-SPARC's YouTube channel.



HEALTHY LIVING

MOVE WITH INTENTION

SELF-EMPOWERMENT

I-SPARC's Healthy Living initiatives support the first Pillar of the Strategy—Self-Empowerment. These programs are designed to bring together community leaders and individuals who are passionate about health and wellness while supporting them in developing programs tailored to the needs of their respective communities.

2025 | 26 HIGHLIGHTS

315
EVENTS

7,164
PARTICIPANTS

KEY FOCUS AREAS



Physical Activity



Healthy Eating



Respecting Tobacco



Healthy Communities

INDIGENOUS RUN/WALK/WHEEL

The Indigenous RunWalkWheel (IRWW) program, which has been successfully delivered since 2007, is designed to gradually prepare community members to walk, run, or wheel in a 5K or 10K event. In 2025/26, 128 leaders were trained at Regional Leader Training Sessions (RTS) and subsequent webinar sessions offered participants extra support with topics ranging from proper footwear to traditional foods. I-SPARC staff provided in-person support at 4 IRWW events: the BMO Marathon/8K in Vancouver, the Vancouver Sun Run, the Times Colonist 10K in Victoria, and the Tears to Hope Relay in northern BC.

“ The IRWW program has encouraged the community to be more active and showed that wellness goals can be fun and achievable. Participants were proud of completing their final event and supporting one another. The IRWW program really helped create positive conversations around health, movement, and taking care of ourselves as individuals and as a community.

Leader, Burns Lake, BC



FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAM

Delivered in partnership with the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), this multi-tiered grant program provides funding to support capacity-building within communities.

This includes hosting workshops, technical training, or attending learning opportunities that honour traditional practices (see pages 6-7).

In 2025/26, a total of 337 tiered grants (a 16% increase from last year) were approved: 170 Food System Program grants (\$848,531); 135 *Learning Together, Growing Together* top-up grants (\$280,005); and 32 grants specifically directed toward infrastructure and equipment (\$319,000). In total, \$1,447,536 in funding was provided to 112 Indigenous communities across BC.

For the first time under I-SPARC leadership, 3 regional gatherings were delivered. Co-hosted with Stellat'en First Nation, ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation, and the Island Indigenous Foods Gathering, these gatherings had a total of 72 food champions in attendance. In 2025/26, 39 new communities and organizations joined the FSP, making it clear that the desire and need for this type of programming is growing.

Virtual learning opportunities were offered as well. In partnership with Kwantlen Polytechnic University, the FSP hosted “Growing Intensive,” a 7-part webinar series that equipped 58 participants with science-based skills to transition from gardening to professional food production. All sessions were recorded and are being hosted by KPU to provide a 3-year knowledge legacy for FSP grant recipients. In total, 263 participants engaged in 14 online technical training and capacity-building webinars.

“ An unexpected outcome was how much this work supported mental and emotional wellness. The act of growing food, being involved in the process, and seeing the results firsthand helped people feel more grounded, connected, and positive. It went beyond just food access and became part of the healing journey for many individuals.

Knowledging All Nations and Developing Unity, KANDU

REGIONAL LEADER TRAINING

A key component of I-SPARC’s Healthy Living programs is the Regional Leader Training Sessions (RTS) held across the province every fall. In 2025/26, I-SPARC successfully delivered 5 RTS in the distinct regions, after receiving an unprecedented 420 registrations. This increased interest resulted in waitlists for four of the five regions, which indicates a growing awareness and need for the programs. The 21 workshops offered, involving 43 facilitators, included topics such as holistic wellness, trauma-informed practices, food as medicine, and active sessions.

Throughout the workshops, community champions and leaders who have been delivering these programs consistently for years shared their knowledge and success stories. Participants returned to their communities with the tools and resources they need to deliver either the Indigenous RunWalkWheel (IRWW) or Honour Your Health Challenge (HYHC) programs. A total of 314 leaders participated—a 6% increase from last year.





FIT NATION

Based on feedback from previously trained leaders, I-SPARC's redesign of the FitNation program as a land-based healing through movement model has been a resounding success. The *FitNation: On the Land* training shifted focus from "workouts" to movement, healing, and connection to the land. The training still conveys important program information and the relevant movements, but now the emphasis is on building connections while moving together and offering healing practices.

In 2025/26, activities included building a traditional sweat lodge, hosting a sweat ceremony, and starting each day with teachings from an elder. The entire training took place outdoors with 14 selected leaders participating. These leaders returned to their communities and delivered an 8-week FitNation program on the land receiving mentorship and grant support.

ABORIGINAL YOUTH FIRST LIFEGUARDING LEADERSHIP CAMP

In partnership with Aboriginal Youth FIRST (Futures in Recreation & Sport Training), this annual lifeguarding and leadership camp was held in August 2025 at the Green Bay Bible Camp in Kelowna, with a total of 24 youth in attendance. During the weeklong experience, participants developed a variety of water-based skills that prepared them for outdoor aquatic recreation leadership opportunities as well as both short- and long-term employment. In total, 51 certifications (in Lifesaving, Scuba Diving, and Advanced Aquatics) were awarded.

As mentorship and sustainability are core values of the program, camp alumni were invited back to support leaders and course facilitators in camp planning. Additionally, 1 alumnus is being mentored to become a future camp leader.

LEARNING IN MOTION

In the fall of 2025, the School Physical Activity and Physical Literacy project transitioned into Learning in Motion (LIM). This school-based program continues to achieve its goals by providing First Nation schools and elementary school educators (K–7) with the training and resources to support the integration of increased physical activity and physical literacy both inside and outside the classroom. This year, I-SPARC delivered 17 in-school support trainings, trained 5 Physical Literacy Leads, and offered 13 workshops. Team members also hosted LIM exhibitor booths at multiple educator conferences.



HONOUR YOUR HEALTH CHALLENGE

The Honour Your Health Challenge (HYHC) program supports leaders in designing their own healthy living programs within their respective communities. In 2025/26, 121 HYHC programs were delivered (an increase of 8%), with 61% of those offered in a school environment.

Program delivery included the provision of healthy snacks and drinks, land-based physical activities, traditional tobacco teachings, and discussions regarding language revitalization. The inclusion of cultural activities also continues to be a large focus of HYHC programming.

“This made my family proud of the better choices I’m making for myself.

Connect to Change Participant, Prince George

TOBACCO CESSATION PROGRAM

In 2025/26, I-SPARC successfully delivered the second cohort of this 4-year commercial tobacco cessation initiative, developed in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society and FNHA. This year, the program, which complements Healthy Living initiatives by integrating culturally grounded wellness practices, expanded into the Northwest and Northeast regions. Curriculum resources continue to be updated and positive participant outcomes, demonstrated through HealthBeat screenings, include improved aerobic fitness and reduced carbon monoxide levels.

SPORT

PLAY WITH PRIDE

Dominic Puglas | 2025 Northwest Regional Recipient, Premier's Awards

STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS

Guided by the second Pillar of the Strategy—Strengthening Pathways, I-SPARC continues to bolster Indigenous sport across British Columbia by investing in people, partnerships, and community capacity.

Through culturally grounded programming, leadership development, and strategic collaborations, we are creating more opportunities for Indigenous participants to engage in sport, develop their skills, and pursue their goals—from first experiences in community sport to excellence in competition and leadership.

SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS SPORT PARTNERS

I-SPARC continues to strengthen Indigenous sport by supporting organizations that provide meaningful opportunities for Indigenous youth throughout British Columbia.

In 2025/26, I-SPARC partnered with and supported initiatives led by organizations including Thunder Rugby, Salish Storm Hockey Association, Métis Nation BC's Ministry of Sport & Active Living, BC Ultimate and its Community Ultimate Spirit Program (CUSP), and World Indigenous Sports & Health (WiSH), helping expand access to culturally relevant sport experiences and community-led programming.



COMMUNITY SPORT DEVELOPMENT

Our community programs are culturally grounded and designed to meet the distinct needs and priorities of the communities and regions. In 2025/26, in collaboration with local and provincial sport partners, I-SPARC exceeded its annual target, successfully delivering 328 community sport development events overall with Indigenous community host partners.

2025-26 ACROSS THE SIX REGIONS

202
CAMPS
INCREASE OF 18%

7,303
CAMP PARTICIPANTS
46% GIRLS, 54% BOYS

104
COACH & OFFICIAL CLINICS
918 PARTICIPANTS

8,841
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
PROVINCE-WIDE





PROFESSIONAL SPORT PARTNERSHIPS

The relationships I-SPARC has been building with BC professional sport franchises over the past few years continue to grow, creating numerous meaningful opportunities for Indigenous youth. Through these collaborations, participants gain access to high-quality instruction and positive role models, equipment, and memorable sport experiences.

In 2025/26, a new collaboration was launched with the **Vancouver Canucks** and **Canucks for Kids** through their Junior Canucks Floor Hockey Program. The six-week skill-building initiative, which includes full equipment kits and leader capacity development, was offered in Cranbrook, engaging 65 youth with the Rocky Mountain Métis Association, in Prophet River First Nation with 21 participants, and in Powell River with 55 youth from Tla'amin Nation participating. In addition, I-SPARC received \$75,000 from the Canucks for Kids Fund to supplement the existing RISE Grant Program budget (see page 31).

The partnership with the **Vancouver Whitecaps** (VWFC) continues to thrive with multiple opportunities for Indigenous youth to experience “the beautiful game” being offered. This year, in addition to several community ticket giveaways, the Whitecaps partnered with I-SPARC to deliver an Indigenous Soccer Athlete Development Camp and Jamboree, co-hosted with Squamish Nation at their new outdoor recreation facility. The camp was very popular, with 94 youth in attendance.

I-SPARC and the **BC Lions Football Club** continue to collaborate on the annual Indigenous Youth Flag Football Program initiative. Over several weeks, youth are introduced to the fundamentals of flag football as well as related life skills such as teamwork, sportsmanship, and leadership. The program was delivered across four communities within the Vancouver Coastal and Fraser regions, with a total of 57 youth participating. At the

conclusion, a tournament was hosted in Surrey at Tom Binnie Park, with extras including community ticket giveaways to BC Lions games.

The collaboration I-SPARC has developed with the **Vancouver Bandits** deepened this year with the co-delivery of regional youth basketball camps in the Fraser and Vancouver Island regions, as well as an NCCP coach development clinic in the Northeast. Together with the Vancouver Reign Basketball Club, the Vancouver Bandits hosted the 2026 Junior All-Native Basketball Tournament (JANT) in Langley, BC. I-SPARC supported officials at the event as well as co-hosting an officials development training clinic for 4 participants (2 women and 2 men) in the lead-up to the event. I-SPARC staff also supported participant registration during JANT week with two volunteers and an I-SPARC community engagement booth on “career day.” The tournament featured 129 teams and over 1800 athletes.



BC INDIGENOUS PROVINCIAL ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT CAMPS

Athlete Development Camps are a key component of the performance sport development pathway, providing opportunities for Indigenous athletes to train, build skills, and connect with high-quality coaching in a culturally supportive environment and with an eye on future competition, including the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG).



In 2025/26, I-SPARC delivered 13 BC Indigenous Provincial Athlete Development Camps in collaboration with our sport partners and hosted in partnership with Indigenous communities across the province. The significantly higher number of host applications made it clear that increasing the number of camps and diversifying sports offered should be considered for future years. A total of 349 athletes participated in the series.

“ Since we launched it in 2022, the Indigenous Youth Program continues to be a meaningful extension of our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. This year our focus will remain the same: to provide a fun, engaging experience where youth can learn the valuable lessons that sport teaches. How teamwork and commitment can lead to growth and success in life.

Jamie Taras, BC Lions Director of Community Partnerships



Ayiana Gagne | 2025 Vancouver Island Regional Recipient Premier's Awards

CANADA GAMES COACHING APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

The Aboriginal Apprentice Coach Program (AACP), a partnership between the Aboriginal Sport Circle, provincial/territorial Indigenous sport bodies, provincial/territorial coaching representatives, the Canada Games Council, and the Coaching Association of Canada, supported two coaches from each province and territory to participate in the Canada Games in apprenticeship roles. The two coaches selected for Team BC, 1 for Lacrosse and 1 for Softball, attended the 2025 Canada Summer Games in their apprentice capacity, supported

by I-SPARC and respective PSO partners (BC Lacrosse, Softball BC). Their participation provided valuable hands-on experience in a multi-sport, high-performance environment, contributing to the professional development and capacity of Indigenous coaches.

“ We loved ILTPD and our departments are already implementing what they learned into their work—we’re excited to see the impact on our BC communities.

Indigenous Long-Term Development Pathway participant, BC Golf

INDIGENOUS LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

The Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development (ILTPD) pathway was developed in partnership with the Aboriginal Sport Circle and Sport for Life. It serves as a critical resource for helping coaches and sport organizations better understand and respond to the unique experiences, strengths, and needs of Indigenous participants at every stage of development as they navigate the transition between Indigenous and mainstream sport. For the 2025/26 year, a BCSP Targeted Initiatives Grant supported I-SPARC in engaging 24 sport leaders connected to the British Columbia Golf Society in a two-day ILTPD workshop, which included KAIROS Blanket Exercise certification. The development of 1 new Learning Facilitator was also delivered, strengthening capacity for Indigenous sport development across the province.

ABORIGINAL COACHING MODULES LEARNING FACILITATOR TRAINING

The Aboriginal Coaching Modules (ACM) are grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and the Holistic Model, helping coaches create culturally safe, inclusive environments where Indigenous participants can thrive. The modules encourage coaches to consider not only physical development, but also the mental, emotional, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of wellness.

In partnership with the Aboriginal Sport Circle, I-SPARC hosted a three-day ACM Learning Facilitator training, supporting 7 Indigenous coaches and community leaders (5 women and 2 men) from four regions across BC. All participants successfully completed the training and will begin co-delivering the Aboriginal Coaching Modules in communities across the province next year, expanding Indigenous-led coach education and strengthening capacity for years to come.





NATIONAL ABORIGINAL HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Team BC delivered another strong showing at the 2025 National Aboriginal Hockey Championships (NAHC), hosted May 5–10, 2025, in Kamloops. Team BC U18 women's and men's teams comprised 40 athletes and 10 coaching and support staff. The men's team placed sixth and the women's team made history by earning its first-ever silver medal, an important milestone for Indigenous girls and women in hockey across the province. That medal win extended Team BC's achievement to 11 consecutive years with at least one NAHC podium finish.

In March 2026, a record-setting provincial Selection Camp also took place in Kamloops. This camp brought together 145 athletes, including the highest-ever participation in the women's division, marking meaningful progress toward equity in the high-performance pathway.

“The moments I enjoy the most are just the simple, everyday activities. During the tournaments, the time you spend eating, playing and in rooms with new friends create the best memories. These moments are the most meaningful because they help build a family-like atmosphere for everyone as well as creating a positive culture for athletic performance.”

Team BC NAHC athlete



KNOWLEDGE-SHARING AND COMMUNITY CONNECTION

In the fall of 2025, I-SPARC successfully delivered its second annual *Pathways: Indigenous Sport Leadership Gatherings*, in partnership with the BC Regional Sport Alliance and its members. These gatherings were designed to bring together Indigenous community champions, coaches, leaders, recreation managers, youth workers and other advocates for leadership development.

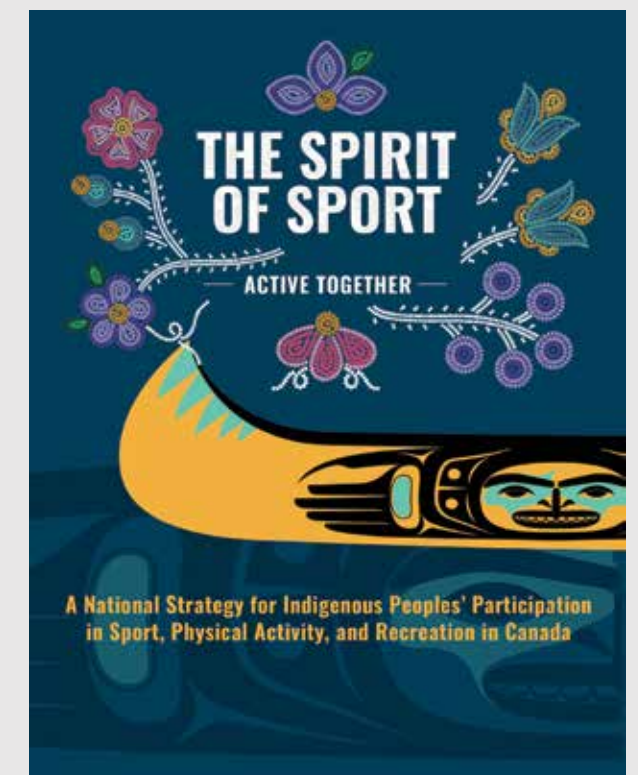
Workshop topics were as wide-ranging as addressing racism in sport, concussion awareness and management, athletic taping, and using the Holistic Model to create inclusive environments, and offered practical tools as well as valuable education, training, and certification opportunities to those in attendance. Two events were held: in Prince George in partnership with Engage Sport North, and in Kelowna in partnership with Pacific Sport Okanagan, providing greater opportunity for participants from more remote areas of the province to attend and drawing a total of 77 participants.



NATIONAL STRATEGY

In 2026, the Aboriginal Sport Circle unveiled a National Strategy for Indigenous Peoples' Participation in Sport, Physical Activity, and Recreation in Canada titled *The Spirit of Sport—Active Together*. This project was inspired by I-SPARC's Provincial Strategy and developed in consultation with I-SPARC partner Indigenous sport bodies.

The Spirit of Sport—Active Together is a shared framework grounded in reciprocity, collaboration, and respect that invites Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations to move forward together. The Strategy recognizes that its success depends not on a single organization, but on sustained, collaborative implementation across all levels of sport, physical activity, and recreation over the next decade, and beyond.



WI'LA'MOLA

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY TRAINING



'Wi'la'mola
Indigenous Cultural Safety Training

I-SPARC's Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) training program was designed in collaboration with Indigenous cultural safety experts.

The ICS program promotes learning opportunities specifically for leaders within the sport, recreation, and physical activity sectors who want to make informed decisions about delivering culturally relevant and appropriate programs for Indigenous participants that are safe, inclusive, and respectful.

In 2025/26, a total of 62 participants successfully completed the ICS training. In addition, I-SPARC supported 3 participants in completing a refresher, while also expanding leadership capacity by training 2 new facilitators and 1 Master Facilitator.

MEANING OF WI'LA'MOLA

Alex Nelson, I-SPARC's Senior Advisor and Elder, and his wife, Nella, were instrumental in shaping the curriculum and content of the ICS program.

In naming the training's guiding theme, Alex chose "Wi' la' Mola," which translates to *We are all travelling together on this journey*. This message underscores the spirit of the program and its alignment with everyone's reconciliation journey.

“ Powerful and impactful... The emotional connection on Day 1 set the stage for open learning.

Indigenous Cultural Safety program participant



2025 I-SPARC ATHLETES OF THE YEAR AWARDS

TIME TO CELEBRATE

Celebrating the accomplishments of Indigenous youth is a key component of the third Pillar of the Strategy — Engagement. Sharing the stories of these impressive role models will inspire others in their communities to pursue healthy active lifestyles.

Established in 2024 and presented in partnership with Sport BC, these annual awards celebrate the province’s most outstanding Indigenous athletes and reinforce the organizations’ shared commitment to reconciliation through sport.

“ Sport BC is proud our member organization I-SPARC has once again chosen our Athlete of the Year Awards to shine a spotlight on their exceptional I-SPARC Male and Female Athlete of the Year recipients. No doubt, the inclusion of their stories makes our event better.

Rob Newman
Sport BC President and CEO



Buzz Manuel | National ASC Coaches Awards



Michelle Webster | National ASC Coaches Awards



I-SPARC’s President Corinne McKay presents the 2025 Athlete of the Year Award to Shalaya Valenzuela

SHALAYA VALENZUELA FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Shalaya, who grew up in Abbotsford and is a member of the Tseshahst First Nation, made history at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris as the first Indigenous woman to win a medal (silver) in Rugby. She also helped Canada secure a third-place World Championship finish during the 2024/25 World Rugby Sevens Series season and, at the varsity level, led the undefeated UBC Thunderbirds to a Canada West title and the program’s first national championship.

FYNN MCCARTHY MALE ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Fynn was a member of Canada’s Men’s Volleyball team at the 2024 Summer Olympics and played for the National Team at the 2025 Volleyball Nations Cup. He continues to excel as a middle blocker on the international stage. Most recently, he captured the 2024/25 CEV Challenge Cup title and earned gold in Poland’s top professional league, the PlusLiga. Fynn grew up in Lake Country and is a citizen of Métis Nation British Columbia.



2025

PREMIER'S AWARDS FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH EXCELLENCE IN SPORT



10 PROVINCIAL AWARDS

These prestigious awards recognize Indigenous athletes who have excelled in performance sports and who demonstrate commitment to their education, culture, and the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles. Many past recipients have gone on to receive university scholarships and/or higher competitive playing fields within their respective sports.

This year, there were 35 regional award winners (from a total of 85 nominations) from which 10 were later named as recipients of the provincial Premier's Awards. I-SPARC celebrated with the winners during a virtual ceremony. The recipients' photos and bios will be on display in the BC Sports Hall of Fame.



BENJAMIN MCKAY

Football & Rugby
Métis Nation BC



DANIEL TURVEY

Rugby & Wrestling
Whispering Pines/Clinton (Pelt'iq't)



JOLAINE BOLAM

Lacrosse
Stó:lō Nation



KAIDEN THORPE

Soccer
Métis Nation BC



MADISON BATCH

Hockey
North Island Métis Community



OLIVIA PEMBERTON

Box & Field Lacrosse
Métis Nation BC



PRESTON SENEVIRATNE

Swimming
Xwisten



SCOTT WHITECOTTON

Hockey
Gitksan Nation



TRYAN SWAMPY-RIVET

Hockey & Rodeo
Samson Cree Nation



ZOE LEAS

Hockey & Field Lacrosse
Kahkewistahaw First Nation

“ I-SPARC helps Indigenous youth through sport, and to be recognized by an organization that uplifts strength, culture, and the future of Indigenous youth is such an honour.

Daniel Turvey, 2025 Provincial Recipient

GRANTS

VALUED LIVING

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS AND BUILDING COMMUNITIES

I-SPARC's grant program is centred around the fourth Pillar of the Strategy—Sustainability.

It is designed to be robust and responsive to the evolving needs of Indigenous communities across the province. Funds are distributed through Healthy Living Community Grants, Food Systems Program Community Grants, the Equipment Grant Program, and the RISE Grant Program.



SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUTH IN CARE

The RISE (Resilient, Inspire, Strength, and Engage) Grant Program recognizes the unique barriers that Indigenous children and youth in (or transitioning from) care face in accessing sport, physical activity, recreational, and cultural opportunities. By offsetting program fees, equipment and travel costs, this initiative, delivered in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, empowers these individuals to experience the transformational effects that come from participation in sport and physical activity.

RISE has also established strong collaborative relationships with local business and suppliers that serve youth with significant medical needs. Some have offered discounted services or equipment at no cost.

For 2025/26, the request for grants was significant. I-SPARC received 1,287 applications for the Under 18 category and 152 applications for Over 18. Ultimately, 1,062 individual grants were approved, with a total of \$530,892 in funding being distributed.



101

EQUIPMENT
GRANTS

209

HEALTHY LIVING
COMMUNITY GRANTS
Inclusive of
HYHC / IRWW / FitNation

348

FOOD SYSTEM
PROGRAM
GRANTS

1,062

RISE
GRANTS

1,720
TOTAL GRANTS
AWARDED

“ Without this funding they would not have been able to attend gymnastics, dance, and elite sports. It is so important in the development of a child to be able to learn, train, and have fun—to meet other kids and learn in different sports. It keeps a kid's mind and body healthy. I am not able to provide financial support towards their extracurricular activities in today's economy. I do not want them to miss any opportunities that help in their development.

Grandparent & legal guardian of 3 young kids in Chilliwack

I·SPARC would like to thank the following Partners,

whose collaboration and support has been essential to the organization’s continued growth in delivering successful programs that have a positive impact on the health and well-being of Indigenous individuals, families, and communities across BC.

First Nations Health Authority
Métis Nation BC
BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres
Province of BC
Government of Canada



We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport and the Ministry of Health.



We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.

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SPORT

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Kalista Pruden	Manager, Food Systems Program
Julie Seal	Provincial Coordinator, HealthBeat
Pauline Johnson	Project Coordinator, Tobacco Cessation & Physical Activity
Susan Meier	Provincial Coordinator, Indigenous RunWalkWheel
Dwayne Roberts	Project Manager, Indigenous Programs–Learning in Motion
Sonja Grosse-Broemer	Provincial Coordinator, Food Systems Program
Morgan Anson	Provincial Coordinator, Engagement, Food Systems Program
Annalynn Prince	Administrative Coordinator



I·SPARC

Move | Play | Compete

Indigenous Sport,
Physical Activity &
Recreation Council



As an Indigenous-led provincial organization, I-SPARC is privileged to work with First Nations, Métis Chartered Communities, Friendship Centres, Indigenous participants, coaches, leaders, and communities across British Columbia. We recognize the many distinct Indigenous Nations whose traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories are the places where sport, recreation, physical activity, and wellness bring people together. We are deeply grateful for the partnerships, leadership, and knowledge shared by Indigenous communities throughout the province, and we remain committed to advancing Indigenous-led pathways that honour culture, strengthen communities, and support the well-being of current and future generations.

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