

Aboriginal Coaching Module Facilitator Training: Perspectives

The Learning Facilitator Training Guidelines are based as much as possible on Aboriginal perspectives of learning. However, our Learning Facilitators will add their own perspective as they gain more experience in working with the material.

The following three points guide our Learning Facilitators when leading a workshop:

1. **Learning activities that acknowledge that each learner is following their own life path** and will take what they need from any given experience. It is therefore essential to respect each learner's freedom of choice. It is not up to you, as a Learning Facilitator, to direct the life of the participants in the workshop. Rather, you are encouraged to help guide coaches in life decisions through the use of stories, examples and humour. The practice of non-interference is connected to the principle of respect.
2. **It is important for Aboriginal coaches to understand coaching theory from their own cultural and historical perspective.** Aboriginal communities must feel a sense of ownership and see their values and culture reflected in institutions and programs. Mainstream sport is often associated with a top-down, coercive model of human interaction. Through culturally relevant programs, Aboriginal communities can see that sport and coaching can use traditional teachings based on sharing, equity and unity. Aboriginal coaching is continually being invented and innovated directly in the field of sport and in the community.
3. **Learning addresses the whole individual.** An Aboriginal approach to teaching seeks to balance the physical, mental-emotional, cultural, and spiritual aspects of each learner. An explanation of each aspect and how it relates to training is outlined below:

Mental

- Help coaches to reason, think, analyse, process, and apply information.
- Develop an understanding of how the coaches in a workshop gather and interpret information, acquire new learning, and develop mastery of skills.
- Keep in mind that some workshop participants may have a limited understanding of English depending on their first language

Physical

- Pay attention to the physical environment – it will have an impact on how you deliver the workshop
- The set-up of tables and chairs can affect how participants relate to each other or how intimidated/comfortable they feel. An open U, a half-circle, or round tables are more conducive to learning than a classroom style
- Check out the comfort of the seating. If only hard chairs are available, you will want to take frequent breaks and plan activities that keep participants moving.
- Pay attention to light and room temperature. Check in with participants

- Symptoms of fatigue and stress will cue a Learning Facilitator to provide breaks or modify instructional methods to accommodate this condition
- Plan your presentation of materials for times when participants are fresh and excited – after morning break, after an active session. Participants are less likely to be able to be attentive after lunch or just before the break

Emotional

- The emotional aspect of learning is related to the connection between the learners and the Learning Facilitator, and among the learners
- The social condition of a learner's community will affect their emotional state. At times learning may depend on your ability to ensure a positive learning environment in which participants can trust, talk, and feel
- You will need to help participants deal with success and failure and provide balance where both experiences are opportunities for growth
- The competitive nature of sport sometimes creates conflict. In a workshop, you are in a unique position to model positive methods of handling conflict. Be aware of your language and how you respond to pressure. Participants will pay attention to all you say and do
- Pay attention to participants' emotional responses. This is a useful and quick way to stay in touch with a participant's response to the physical, mental, and spiritual comfort level with the workshop material

Spiritual

- Spirituality affects our purpose for living and how we choose to live. Spirituality also helps us explore basic life questions such as who we are and how we relate to others. It affects our behaviour and helps us put life events into perspective. A Learning Facilitator is encouraged to acknowledge this aspect and understand his/her sacred path in life
- Take time before each workshop to reflect on why you are leading the workshop and how this affects your preparation. What, whom, and even how you teach is an expression of your values. Very few individuals write down their teaching philosophy or even explain it to someone else. Rather it shows up in the objectives you set for a workshop or how you interact with learners
- Occasionally there is discomfort discussing the role spirituality plays in sport. You are encouraged to respect the beliefs of each learner and the role spirituality plays in their community
- Each person's connection with the natural world and creation is deeply personal. A Learning Facilitator must be aware of their own beliefs and be comfortable discussing them, while allowing the expression of spirituality among learners to take place in a respectful manner. Discussing specific practices may not be appropriate; spiritual practices may be different for some people. Rather, a Learning Facilitator may choose to be more generic in

use of terms and ideas. Encourage learners to express themselves in their own ways and to be proud and comfortable with sharing their beliefs

