

**REPORT from the
Officials' Development Task Force
to
Sask Sport Inc.**

MARCH 2010



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	Page 3
2. METHODOLOGY	Page 4
3. ASSESSING THE ISSUES	
Recruiting Officials	Page 5
Retaining Officials	Page 6
Training & Developing Officials	Page 8
Abuse of Officials	Page 9
Province Wide Multisport Officials Organization	Page 9
4. RECOMMENDATIONS	Page 10
5. APPENDICES	
Terms of Reference	Page 15
Task Force Members	Page 16
Direction from Sask Sport Board of Directors	Page 17
Task Force Work Plan	Page 18
Task Force Action Plan	Page 19
Research	Page 20
Understanding the Issues	Page 22
Clarifying the Issues	Page 24
ATTACHMENTS:	
A. Officials Survey	
B. PSGB Survey	
C. North & Tribal Council Survey	

1. INTRODUCTION

A Task Force to examine issues affecting officials' development in Saskatchewan was put in place in October 2009. The Task Force was commissioned by the Sask Sport Board of Directors in response to the following motion passed at the June 2009 Sask Sport AGM to:

“strike a sub-committee to examine the major issues affecting our officials and the recruitment, retention and abuse of our officials and examine the possible interventions to keep our officials. And to explore the possibility of setting up a provincial wide official organization.”

The Sask Sport Board of Directors directed that a coordinator be hired and a Task Force appointed to study, research, and guide the coordinator to determine issues and challenges and then suggest possible solutions. The Task Force was requested to report its findings and recommendations by the end of February 2010.

The Task Force is invited to:

- 1. Identify issues or core questions that may guide the development of the stakeholder survey;***
- 2. Direct the coordinator and develop ideas that may lead to solutions or recommendations that will engage participants in discussion around the core questions;***
- 3. Review and formally receive the survey results and the final recommendations.***

2. METHODOLOGY

Sask Sport Inc. (SSI) Board of Directors directed that a coordinator be hired to work with the Task Force. Following the selection of a coordinator by the management of Sask Sport Inc. an organizational meeting occurred between the coordinator, the Task Force chairperson assigned by the board of directors of SSI and a staff member from SSI assigned to participate in the Task Force and act as a resource for the Task Force.

This meeting set out target groups to be included on the Task Force and brainstormed prospective participant choices to be involved on the Task Force. The coordinator developed a background statement to be sent to potential Task Force members and distributed same to prospective individuals. A final list of interested individuals was presented to the chairperson and invitations to participate on the Task Force were delivered.

An initial meeting of the Task Force was held via video conference between Saskatoon and Regina. The objectives of the Task Force were laid out by the chairperson and discussion regarding process, issues and potential initiatives was shared by members of the Task Force. This initial meeting determined that stakeholder surveys be developed by the coordinator to solicit information and opinions from active officials, administration of the provincial sport governing bodies (PSGB) and from tribal council sport coordinators and sport coordinators in the North.

The Task Force also directed that the coordinator conduct face to face meetings with officials' coordinators from the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association (SHSAA), interested individuals from the staff of various PSGB's and with school and community sport coordinators in the North. The opportunity existed to attend regularly scheduled meetings of these groups within the SHSAA and the Northern Sport Culture & Recreation District. (NSCRD). Special meetings with the PSGB staff members were held in Regina and Saskatoon.

Three stakeholder e-surveys were developed and distributed using the online program known as Survey Monkey. The officials' survey was distributed through the provincial offices of the SHSAA, PSGB's and to community recreation directors via the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association (SPRA). Each organization was requested to distribute the e-survey to officials at novice, intermediate and elite levels in each Saskatchewan district. Two hundred two (202) responses from officials were received. The second survey sought information from the administrations of the PSGB's. This survey was distributed by SSI to all their members. Forty-one (41) completed surveys came from these stakeholders. The third survey was designed to solicit opinions from tribal council sport coordinators and sport coordinators in the North. This survey was conducted by telephone and personal interviews. The responses were recorded on the e-survey. Seven (7) completed surveys were recorded. A complete summary of each of the stakeholder surveys is contained in the attachments to this report.

Two further meetings of the Task Force were held one to discuss the stakeholders' surveys and develop recommendations. The final meeting developed the final report and recommendations of the Task Force.

3. ASSESSING THE ISSUES

Recruiting Officials

During the research phase, Saskatchewan PSGB web sites were explored looking specifically for information and direction regarding officials. What became apparent is that few PSGB web sites indicate a step-by-step process for becoming an official. The majority listed official clinic dates, however, most listed dates that had passed and there was no direction for a would-be official to move forward. A description of the process for becoming an official and for maintaining or improving an official's current level was absent or not readily available without going through other areas of the web site.

The Saskatchewan Hockey Association (SHA) web site is an excellent example of the type of officials' information that would seem to be most beneficial to aspiring and current officials. The Task Force would recommend other PSGB's examine the SHA web site (<http://referees.sha.sk.ca/>) as an example of how using this technology can benefit the recruitment, retention and development of officials. SHA has developed online modules that must be completed annually by every official, prior to attending the mandatory annual clinic. The online modules have allowed SHA to reduce the amount of classroom time required at each clinic and has allowed for an effective on-ice segment to be added. Most sport governing bodies have the officiating information already developed, and it would be a matter of organization and renewal of current methods to take advantage of modern methods to access every active and potential official.

Many suggestions came forward in survey responses regarding methods to recruit officials. From the Task Force and the surveys it was noted that the education and training sessions provided by most PSGB's occurred with the new official participating in the same rules clinic as veteran and upgrading officials. While this may provide adequate numbers of individuals to recover clinic expenses, it is not necessarily the best environment for making the new official comfortable or feeling as if they have been trained to be a new official. It often overwhelms the novice official and creates concern about taking that first step to actually officiate for fear they may encounter the rarely occurring scenario or disruptive coach often discussed at rule clinics. Therefore, an effort should be made to make the clinic and the exams less intimidating and more user friendly for new officials.

Other suggestions most often recorded on the survey included targeting graduating or retiring athletes as a potential pool of officials. It was pointed out that many young individuals trained to officiate often leave communities to pursue education or career opportunities. It would seem important to approach or identify individuals who left sport involvement to pursue education, career or family commitments to return to sport as an official. The survey indicates personal contact is very effective in recruiting officials. Another key aspect of recruitment identified in the survey was to introduce officiating to young people during their participation time as athletes. Sessions on sport rules, role of the official, respect for the game and responsibility to conduct one's self in a fair play manner may lead to young people not only being better athletes but also future officials.

Retaining Officials

Throughout the stakeholders survey it was pointed out that payment of officials was deemed to be adequate and not a key concern, particularly for veteran officials. However, it was pointed out that young officials (under 16) become involved and stay involved because of the money. It was felt that the sixteen to twenty-five-year-old groups often leaves officiating for part-time jobs or employment that is more lucrative. Officials surveyed also wanted it conveyed that while payment is considered adequate, at present, pay must keep pace with other methods of earning money. Many officials mentioned the costs required in officiating as a concern: fees to be an official, fees to upgrade, cost of equipment, expenses to travel and providing care and comfort when working as an official. Included in care and comfort are dressing rooms for officials, secure access to and from venues, meals if working at a longer event, etc.

Providing young officials with a sense of ownership and responsibility within an official's organization is important to maintain officials. Including them in decision making regarding expectations, assignments, training opportunities and administration of the group may be vital to ongoing involvement. An atmosphere of inclusion of all officials within the officials association will place a value on their participation and encourage future potential.

The idea of mentoring for officials was suggested in response to a number of survey questions. First consideration would be given to new officials; however, it was repeatedly suggested as a key for the retention and development of all officials. It was pointed out that individuals selected as mentors must be trained in methods of mentoring (coaching) officials, not only in providing evaluations, but also receive training in the delivery of constructive support and confidence building. Training individuals to be effective clinicians is also an issue. Aboriginal communities emphasized the lack of trained aboriginal clinicians as a key concern.

It is impossible to discuss officiating issues without making the distinction that there is an obvious difference in the ability to be a successful long term official based on where you are located in the province. For the most part, Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw have well organized officials groups in place. These officials groups will always need to recruit new officials but they are well established with the ability to provide education, training, mentoring, and evaluation to their group. There is no shortage of opportunities to work as an official as leagues are well developed and depend on the officials group to service there needs for all age and ability levels. Within those cities the recreation leagues also have established officiating groups to handle the programs in place. It is often from these ranks that the PSGB recruit clinicians to work throughout the province. The problem, in some cases, is they are more concerned about their own development as an official or only in official's development within their city association.

The problem in areas outside of the three major cities is magnified and becomes more acute depending on how far you are located from the major cities. Centres like Prince Albert, Yorkton, Swift Current and Battleford have some success dependant on the sport and the officials' group established. Officials in smaller communities are working in isolation and in some cases have become disenchanted with the service provided by the PSGB to provide officials training and support their needs.

In the survey, it was repeatedly reported that there is a continual decrease in the numbers of games played in rural areas; therefore, fewer opportunities to practice the craft of being an official. They expressed concern on being unable to develop to a proficiency level required for playoffs when hosted in their area. In this event, officials are usually brought in from another area or the competition is held in a larger centre. The opportunity for growth provided by officiating at higher level competition is lost. This seems to snowball when rural officials question why they would pay fees to the provincial officials association if the training is difficult to access and the opportunity to officiate at any playoff level does not exist. Many stated they officiate as a service to the school or community but lack confidence to work outside the confines of their community or school due to this factor. They desire to be more competent officials but feel they are overlooked when they seek support from the PSGB responsible for officials' development. The reality is there is no organization for them to participate in like the successful officials' group that exist in larger centres.

It would seem critical to retention and development of competent officials that some type of officials' group similar to those in cities needs to be developed in rural areas. This could be achieved by using district or zone boundaries or simply grouping known officials together in a subset of the established sport boundaries. Hockey seems to have the most success in this area and baseball has some successes. Officials in rural Saskatchewan work in isolation often as a one-person official. They do not experience the collegial rewards and support of fellow officials until they reach a much higher level of officiating. Most will be denied that opportunity, as they will leave officiating long before they reach that level of officiating. Officials' groups can make it more efficient for education opportunities, mentoring, and certainly provide opportunity to officiate more games, if they are recognized and organized to service a larger area.

As stated earlier, this problem is magnified once playoff seasons begin. The PSGB and the urban associations are sought after to provide officials for rural areas. Often times this is not possible due to the finite number of officials within urban officials' groups. They are not able to cover both the rural and urban area. In a worst case scenario urban officials will go to rural areas and charge higher game fees and expenses than normally paid to do the same contest in their home centre. This practice is detrimental to official development and unethical. Rural centres are held at ransom as their only other option is to pass on hosting. PSGB's and officials' groups should discourage this practice by their members.

In addition, there appears to be a noticeable disconnect between high school officials and sport organization officials' associations. In school based sports the majority of the officiating opportunities are high school games. Some officials feel an allegiance to the school only and neglect to become involved in the sport organization officials' association. In spite of efforts by schools to encourage officials to belong to the respective officials' organization by paying higher game fees to officials that are registered with the PSGB, there are still too many active officials particularly in rural Saskatchewan that do not belong. The SHSAA and PSGB have each developed officials' organizations to address training and assigning of officials. Cooperation and understanding between the SHSAA and PSGB's needs to ensure that each of their efforts to improve officiating is coordinated.

Training & Development of Officials

There is no doubt from the surveys that the provincial sport governing body is considered the organization responsible for officials' development in Saskatchewan. The perception is the PSGB's receive funding for sport development and officiating is a key component of that development. Rightfully, much time, effort and resources have gone to development of athletes and coaches. The development of the officials has often been left to volunteer officials and their groups which may or may not be included in the administration of the PSGB. Many PSGB's have evolved to have specific trained employees to manage and deliver athlete and coach development. Officiating is for the most part left in the hands of volunteer officials. This usually falls to the most involved officials in the organization, usually elite officials. Therefore, there is a perception that an imbalance exists in the distribution of resources to grass roots officials' development. In the end it is the PSGB that must be accountable for officiating.

Rural and remote areas expressed concern that they do not have reasonable access to officiating clinics. They cite PSGB expectations that minimum numbers of participants are required to allow for all costs associated with the clinic to be recovered. This cost recovery may not be feasible in remote rural and northern areas and may need to be subsidized. Respondents claimed a lack of follow-up after registration with the PSGB. Thus they question the value given for the fee paid and this ends in reluctance to pay the fee again. It is apparent that some ongoing training or contact is critical to make officials understand the need for fees. The overwhelming survey response is that mentorship and evaluation is a key component that is lacking at all levels. A frequent suggestion was to consider using non-active, retired officials to provide mentoring and education. Providing these individuals with training to perform this service would be required. It was recommended that mentoring opportunities done in a group environment at tournaments with a number of officials participating is enjoyable and rewarding. Again, that opportunity to connect with other active officials is absent in rural Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal officials and communities reported reluctance by clinicians to come to a First Nations' community to deliver officials' training. They are often expected to travel to a larger centre. This seems to be the case for most rural areas. The practice of expecting officials to travel to Regina or Saskatoon is not viewed as a fair or effective method for officials' education. Travel beyond the area the official is most likely to officiate within seems unreasonable to most respondents. Use of a jamboree format in rural and remote areas to provide training and support for athletes, coaches and officials all at the same time was suggested as an effective method. It was also noted that in rural areas the same individual is an official for multiple sports which affects when training opportunities may be accessed.

Abuse of Officials

I believe the Task Force was pleasantly surprised by the responses to questions around abuse of officials. Most indicated that there is a noticeable decrease in the amount of abuse toward officials. It was acknowledged that recent efforts are making a difference. However, they made certain to say officials are turned off from officiating (especially young officials) due to verbal abuse by coaches, players, and parents. It is important to continue campaigns to stop abuse. Zero tolerance levels were pointed to as being effective when supported by action from sport group.

Every sport organization must continue to emphasize the educational nature of amateur sport contests. Errors are a part of the competition and will occur by each of the participants in the contest: athletes, coaches and officials. Protocols must be in place to report and address errors and promote non-confrontational methods to improve coaches' behaviour and officials' performance. Through positive examples of coach and official interaction our athletes and fans will be more respectful and understanding. It is important to reaffirm this same expectation level during playoff events.

Province Wide Multisport Officials Organization

As noted in the stakeholder surveys there were differing opinions on this matter between the PSGB administrators and the officials surveyed. The majority opinion in the PSGB survey was 64% in favour of a multisport officials' organization. The officials, North and tribal council survey indicated 61% were not in favour.

Most officials stated they felt it was up to their PSGB to deal with officials' matters as they are specific to the sport. They also indicated they felt the PSGB was capable and had been doing a good job. There was a real reluctance to belong to another officials' organization in order to be an official. Time and cost were cited as obstacles to wanting to be involved in a multisport organization for officials.

The Task Force had the sense that the PSGB was simply looking for some assistance in the area of officials' development. Particularly to understand what other PSGB's are doing with officials. They also pointed to a void of education opportunities to address officials' education beyond the rules of the game and managing the game.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

On behalf of the Officials' Development Task Force the following nine (9) recommendations are submitted to the Sask Sport Board of Directors:

1. Sask Sport should require each PSGB to identify and prioritize officials' development plans within each PSGB's strategic plan

Have each PSGB identify an official's development plan unique to their activity. This plan should indicate achievable, measurable targets that must be met in order to maintain funding levels. Encourage the PSGB to include specific plans for recruitment, education, mentorship, and evaluation applicable to identified official levels provided by their sport. Officials' development needs to be given similar priority to athlete & coach development within a PSGBs plans and programs. Ensure grassroots officials' development plans and resources are sufficient compared to resources committed to elite level officials.

The Sport Officials Canada organization has done work on long term development of officials. See this web site for complete report. (<http://www.sportofficials.ca/index.php?action=cms.education>) According to suggestions in their report, PSGB's should identify an official's leadership group that includes officials, sport administrators, coaches and athletes. Define the role of the official in your sport. Define what a "competent" and what a "great" official are and the levels necessary to achieve those levels in your sport. Identify specific skills necessary at each level. (The work done by the Sport Officials UK organization known as "National Occupational Standards for Officials" may be helpful). Finally support officials to achieve these skills throughout the province.

From the stakeholder feedback it may be important to adjust National Sport Governing Body plans for officiating development so that they better suit the Saskatchewan situation of remote areas and differences in population levels. For example, it may be unrealistic to have a level one official's development course that requires twenty-one hours of instruction for a first time basketball official. Few prospective officials would be able or willing to travel for a three-day clinic given costs, work and family considerations.

2. Sask Sport provide encouragement and support for PSGB's to establish on-line officials areas within their web sites

The best example found in our research is the Saskatchewan Hockey Association web site. The majority of the official's portion of this web site was developed by the SHA. It is now being adopted by other hockey jurisdictions through Hockey Canada. SHA may be the only Saskatchewan PSGB that has devoted resources to have a staff person to manage the official's component in their sport development plans.

From the Stakeholder survey it would seem there is frustration with the ability of the PSGB to track registered officials. It was reported that most lists were out of date. In some cases the concern was the lack of accessibility to current, timely information, as well as, a history of involvement and levels achieved. This concern could also be addressed with an online system.

3. Sask Sport support a multisport officials' training opportunity through a conference or on-line

The Task Force is not recommending the development of a multisport officials' organization in Saskatchewan. Individuals interested in a multisport officials' organization may consider membership in the Sport Officials Canada organization.

Most of the areas suggested in the stakeholder surveys could be covered through professional development opportunities, supported by Sask Sport Inc., that include coaches and officials from all sports.

Areas that could be addressed would cross over all sports and could include a variety of topics: efficient communication, game management, dealing with conflict, training to be an effective official, etc. This could also be an opportunity to expose Saskatchewan officials to motivational speakers from the official's perspective.

Work currently underway in Quebec through their "Multisport Training for Quebec Officials" could be a resource to assist with development of multisport officials' training opportunities in Saskatchewan.

4. Sask Sport explore MAP grant criteria to emphasize official's development as a priority spending area.

PSGB surveys most recorded comment or suggestion revolved around increased funding to support officiating development. There may be opportunities to reallocate funds for official's development projects within the Membership Assistance Program. Of course, each PSGB will determine how best to manage their annual funding to develop their sport, including officials.

5. Sask Sport facilitate and share expertise on mentorship

From the stakeholder survey it was apparent that mentorship is a key desire for those involved in officiating. The Task Force wants to stress that mentorship needs to be defined at various levels. It should be an education environment that allows for growth of confidence, support and encouragement. Sask Sport and PSGB's have experience in mentoring for coaches. This expertise and contacts already established can be called upon to develop trained mentors for officials. PSGB's require support in developing their own mentorship program. There needs to be an insistence that levels are provided from entry to advance and are unique to the level of skill development.

6. Sask Sport act as a facilitator regarding issues between officials' organizations and user groups.

Sask Sport has significant experience and resources developed for conflict resolution. Once concerns have been addressed within the PSGB organization individuals, user groups or officials that feel they have not been heard should be able to approach Sask Sport for dispute resolution.

It is acknowledged within this document that the PSGB is considered responsible for officials development within the province and if concerns exist about the effectiveness or access to these services they may need a third party to hear the concern. Sask Sport is in the position to ensure action by the responsible PSGB or support for the PSGB when hearing the concern.

7. Sask Sport consider advertising campaigns regarding role of officials and the need for officials

It was recognized in the report that officials feel the role of the official continues to be better understood and appreciated. Credit is given to the work by PSGB's and Sask Sport to raise public awareness and establish new expectations for participants in sport as to the treatment of all individuals involved. Efforts must continue in this area to ensure that the adversarial approach used by some toward opponents and the officials in sport is replaced by respect and appreciation for the role each play in successful competitive contests.

A series of public service announcements or poster campaigns that continue to get this point across would be perceived as worthwhile by the stakeholders contacted by the Task Force. Messages need to convey the importance of the role of the official; show that the contest can't go on without official; and continue to communicate the message abuse has no place in sport. A media campaign to recruit officials across all sport could be undertaken on behalf of all Sask Sport members, but, this may want to be considered following work by PSGB's to assure that they can direct and provide potential officials with the necessary training and support to be successful long term officials.

8. Sask Sport consider program to recognize officials contribution to sport in Saskatchewan

A number of surveys indicated that current Sask Sport awards programs do not have a category specifically for officials. It would seem that if every sport contest requires athletes, coaches and officials then the awards program would recognize the success and dedication that exists in each group.

In addition, each PSGB should evaluate the recognition program currently in place within their own PSGB to determine if they have recognized officials within their own awards programs.

9. Sask Sport and its members should continue to work with the Aboriginal community and the North to identify unique strategies and opportunities to advance officials certification, training and other forms of officials' participation and development.

It is apparent from the feedback that a critical area where officials' development and participation is lacking is with the Aboriginal communities and the North. The spirit of the previous recommendations is to identify generic issues applicable to all stakeholders; therefore, it should be noted that the Aboriginal community and the North are included, by association, in these broader recommendations.

However, it should not be lost that unique strategies will need to be fostered with Aboriginal organizations, communities and the North: efforts to certify Aboriginal and Northern-based course conductors and/or cross-cultural training for current course conductors; more efforts to resolve barriers of access and affordability for clinics and certification; using competitions such as the Saskatchewan First Nation Games and the Saskatchewan Games as opportunities for mentoring, evaluation and gaining experience; and, continuing with targeted programs such as the Aboriginal Coaches and Officials Program as a means to encourage, recruit and develop officials. Appropriate policies, plans, and resource allocations need to be put in place to have success in this area; a "one size fits all" approach will not work.

5. APPENDICES

Terms of Reference	Page 15
Task Force Members	Page 16
Direction from Sask Sport Board of Directors	Page 17
Task Force Work Plan	Page 18
Task Force Action Plan	Page 19
Research	Page 20
Understanding the Issues	Page 22
Clarifying the Issues	Page 24

ATTACHMENTS:

1. **Officials Survey**
2. **PSGB Survey**
3. **North & Tribal Council Survey**

Officials' Development Task Force Terms of Reference

MANDATE

The mandate of the Officials' Development Task Force is to examine issues and potential solutions to improve the development of officials in Saskatchewan and submit a final report to Sask Sport Inc.

The Task Force shall serve as a sub-committee under the auspices of the Sport Committee and the Board of Directors of Sask Sport.

STRUCTURE

- The Task Force will consist of six to nine volunteer members
- One member is appointed from the Board of Directors, who shall serve as Chairperson.
- The remainder of the volunteers are appointed from at-large. At-large volunteer appointments are considered from the pool of volunteers that expressed interest via Sask Sport's volunteer recruitment process, or via alternate recruitment methods if need be.
- Consideration is given to gender balance and Aboriginal representation on the committee, as well as a general knowledge or understanding of officials' development programs and delivery.
- Committee appointments will be finalized upon approval of Sask Sports Board of Directors.
- Sask Sport staff shall serve in an ex-officio capacity to this committee.
- A contract position to support the Task Force initiative will be established; however, all human resource functions related to the hiring or performance of the contractor shall be the responsibility of the Manager of the Sport Division and the General Manager of Sask Sport Inc.

OFFICIALS' DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEMBERS

The Task Force consisted of the following Individuals:

CRAIG FRANCIS (Regina) - current member of the Sask Sport Board of Directors. Designated by the Sask Sport Board of Directors to act as chairperson for the Task Force.

JACKIE PACKET (Prince Albert) - teacher at St. Mary High School. Current district official's commissioner for the North Central district of the Sask High Schools Athletic Association. Member of the Sask Volleyball Association officials committee.

MIKE TANTON (Saskatoon) - youth coordinator involved with the White Buffalo Youth Lodge. He is the coordinator of their youth basketball program and an active basketball official.

ELEMER JERKOVITS (Regina) - elite level baseball official. Involved as a clinician and mentor for many years. Represented Saskatchewan at many national championships, most recently Canada Games in PEI.

ALEX JOHNSTONE (Melfort) - retired teacher. As a teacher coach he was involved in many sports. Former Executive Director of Sask Athletics. Currently involved as an official and an instructor / mentor for athletics officials.

AMY SHIPLEY (Saskatoon) - employed by Sask Sport as the aboriginal coaching and officials coordinator.

MARK BRACKEN (Regina) – employed by Sask Sport as the manager of coaching development for the province. Mark will be a resource to the committee on behalf of Sask Sport.

LARRY LAFRENTZ (Regina) - contracted by Sask Sport to be the coordinator of the Officials Development Review. Former Executive Director of the Sask High Schools Athletic Association.

***SHELDON DEAN** (Regina) - Manager, Officiating Development for the Sask Hockey Association. * Sheldon will be involved in an advisory or consultative role to the Task Force.

Direction for Officials' Development Review Project

Sask Sport was directed by the following resolution from the June 2009 Sask Sport AGM to ***“strike a sub-committee to examine the major issues affecting our officials and the recruitment, retention and abuse of our officials and examine the possible interventions to keep our officials. And to explore the possibility of setting up a provincial wide official organization.”***

The Sask Sport Board of Directors directed that a coordinator be hired and a Task Force appointed to study, research, and guide the coordinator to determine issues and challenges and then suggest possible solutions. The task force is to report its findings and recommendations by the end of February 2010.

The Task Force is invited to:

- 4. Identify issues or core questions that may guide the development of the stakeholder survey;***
- 5. Direct the coordinator and develop ideas that may lead to solutions or recommendations that will engage participants in discussion around the core questions;***
- 6. Review and formally receive the survey results and the final recommendations.***

Coordinator directed to:

- 1. Conduct research into any existing provincial or national strategies, initiatives or best practices.***
- 2. Develop Saskatchewan stakeholder survey.***
- 3. Coordinate meetings and prepare reports for Task Force Committee.***
- 4. Assist with external communication or presentations to the membership or other stakeholders.***
- 5. Prepare and submit final position paper (recommendations).***

TASK FORCE WORK PLAN

Introduction: Overview of Objectives and Research

The Task Force chairperson will outline the task and objectives set by the Sask Sport Board of Directors and the Sask Sport membership. The coordinator will research Canadian and other sources for official's development strategies or best practices provincially or nationally and report to the Task Force. Task Force chairperson, coordinator and Sask Sport staff member assigned to Task Force will collaborate on prospective Task Force members. Invitations to participate will be issued by the chairperson.

Understanding the Issues

The appointed Task Force will meet to discuss officiating in Saskatchewan and make suggestions to approach known issues. The Sask Sport Board of Directors has also suggested that a survey of stakeholders be undertaken by the Task Force to further understand issues, challenges, barriers and potential solutions. The purpose of the survey will be to develop a full understanding of the problem, to identify sub and related concerns, and to assign priority to the issues identified.

Clarifying the Issues

Further meetings of the Task Force will be required to review survey feedback. The concerns and issues identified may be clarified through small and large group discussions or meetings with stakeholders. Why each issue is important and how the issues impact on the more general problem of establishing recommendations to improve officiating in the province will be explored.

Developing Recommendations / Assessing the Issues

Possible responses to the issues will be developed and described in as much detail as time permits. The alternatives will be assessed in terms of adherence to the original task, cost, risks to the organization, ease of implementation and member acceptance.

Strategies to Select and Implement the Response

Once the research, survey and meetings are complete, the Task Force will determine what recommendations may be put forward to the Sask Sport Board of Directors.

TASK FORCE ACTION PLAN

The following table indicates a schedule of meetings and survey distribution dates to obtain stakeholder feedback undertaken by the Task Force on officials' development in Saskatchewan:

STAKEHOLDER	FEEDBACK METHOD	WHO	BY WHEN
Task Force Mtg	Video Conference Mtg Regina / Saskatoon	Task Force	Nov 17, 2009
SHSAA – Exec Director	Face to Face Mtg	Larry	Dec 1, 2009
SHSAA – Officials Commissioner s	Focus Group Mtg - Saskatoon	Larry	Dec 5, 2009
PSGB – Exec Director	Focus Group Mtgs - Regina and Saskatoon	Larry / Mark Larry/ Amy	Dec 15/17, 2009
SHSAA – Officials Commissioner s	E-survey	Larry	Jan 4, 2010
SHSAA – Ref-in-Chief	E-survey	Larry	Jan 4, 2010
SHSAA – School; District; Provincial rated officials	E-survey	Larry	Jan 4, 2010
PSGB – Exec Director	E-survey	Larry	Jan 7, 2010
PSGB – Officials Coordinator	E-survey	Larry	Jan 7, 2010
PSGB – Officials Clinician	E-survey	Larry	Jan 7, 2010
PSGB – Novice; Intermediate; Elite rated Officials	E-survey	Larry	Jan 7, 2010
Task Force Mtg	Video Conference Mtg Regina / Saskatoon	Task Force	Jan 21, 2010
Minor Sport - Community Recreation Director	E-survey	Larry	Jan 21, 2010
Minor Sport – Officials Assignor	E-survey	Larry	Jan 21, 2010
Minor Sport – Local officials	E-survey	Larry	Jan 21, 2010
Tribal Council Coordinators	Telephone Survey	Amy / Mike	Jan 28, 2010
Northern Sask – Coordinators	Conference - Prince Albert	NSCRD / Larry	Feb 3-5, 2010
Task Force Mtg	Video Conference Mtg Regina / Saskatoon	Task Force	Feb 23, 2010

SUMMARY OF WORK AND ACTION PLANS

Research

Research of Canadian and other sources for official's development strategies or best practices provincially or nationally has been ongoing since October, 2009. At the first Task Force meeting, discussion took place regarding current multi-sport officials' organizations in existence. Each of the organizations listed below are national in scope. Research focused on efforts of the following organizations:

- a. Sport Officials Canada <http://www.sportofficials.ca/>
- b. National Association of Sport Officials (USA) <http://www.naso.org/>
- c. Australian sports commission <http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/officials>
- d. Sport Officials UK: <http://www.sportofficialsuk.com/>

Sports Officials Canada lists the following as its objectives:

- a. to serve as a voice for Canadian sports officials,
- b. to create and develop a national code of conduct for sports officials in order to promote, foster and perpetuate healthy and sustainable sports officiating throughout Canada,
- c. to enhance the performance of sports officials throughout Canada by providing professional development materials, conferences, training materials and other educational resources,
- d. to develop and enhance programs for the recruitment and retention of national sports officials,
- e. to create strategic partnerships with organizations that have a stake in sports officiating throughout Canada,
- f. to enhance the image of sports officials within the sports community and with the public at large,
- g. to increase public awareness, understanding and recognition for the importance of sports officiating throughout Canada.

Sports Officials UK (SOUK) is recognized as the organization responsible for representing and supporting officials across all sports in the United Kingdom. SOUK is a group of representatives from a number of NGB's who are all responsible for the training education and development of officials within their given sport. SOUK was formed to address some of the common problems and recruitment issues encountered by sports and share examples of good practice in the relation to the training and development of referees, umpires, stewards and judges. **SOUK** has been involved in consultations to develop National Occupational Standards for officials. The National Occupational Standards for officials are listed on their web site and are a good resource.

The province of Quebec has developed and is in the early stages of program delivery for multisport training for Quebec officials. The program has been developed by Sport Quebec following recommendations from their committee for the development of officials. It adopts a competency based approach using a problem based learning model. The Multisport Training for Quebec Officials (MTQO) program offers skill improvement tools which aim at fostering recruitment and retention of officials.

Sport Quebec has developed two program modules or workshops that were to be available in 2009. The first titled “Stress Management” addresses situations faced by sport officials likely to cause stress which tends to reduce the level of enjoyment in officiating and can also hinder optimal performance. The workshop provides basic aspects of understanding the stress process and endeavours to enable the official to become familiar and experiment with efficient ways to reduce or eliminate negative aspects of stress.

The second module titled “Decision Making Process / Problem Solving” deals with making decisions or resolving problems associated with the role of the official. The process consists of several stages, from analysis of facts to the communication of the decision. The workshop provides the official with simple and structured method of analysis for better decision-making and problem-solving.

Sport Quebec expects to have six additional program modules available for launch in 2010. The modules are Relationship and Intervention with Coaches; Efficient Communication; Conflict Management and Resolution; Preparing for Competition Out-of-Province or Abroad; The Officials Philosophy and Soft Skills; and Managing Officials, Volunteers and Your Career.

This is the only non-national initiative on multisport officials training discovered during the research for the Task Force. Certainly this program should be monitored for its effectiveness and ongoing development. It appears to cover topics that have come forward during the discussions held by this Task Force and feedback from Saskatchewan stakeholders included in our surveys.

Understanding the Issues

The appointed Task Force has met formally on three occasions. The first meeting was an open discussion on the assignment and the Task Force member's views of issues, challenges, barriers and potential solutions. This meeting also formed the basis for the stakeholder surveys to be undertaken. It was determined that the development of three e-surveys was necessary.

An e-survey targeting active officials resulted in 198 responses. The survey for officials was distributed via the PSGB offices, the SHSAA office and through community recreation directors. The second e-survey sought information from Saskatchewan sport governing bodies (41 responses received). This survey was e-mailed to each PSGB listed with Sask Sport Inc. The third e-survey was developed to solicit opinions from tribal council sport coordinators and sport coordinators in the north (6 responses received). Opinions from the tribal councils and the north came via the e-survey and interviews conducted by telephone and in person. The surveys were distributed as indicated in the action plan table listed on page 7 of this document.

The second Task Force meeting reviewed responses to the Officials and PSGB surveys. Majority opinions on issues and initiatives began to take shape. The third meeting was to further review responses from all surveys and review a draft final report. The chart listed on the following page identified key items and a potential plan for actions and recommendations.

See the table listed on the following page that sorts issues into various categories.

Key Items	Get Them in the Door	Have a Development plan	Mentor to Support and Develop	Reduce the Irritants
Key Components	Raise the profile of officiating and officials, across disciplines: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great way to extend participation in a sport • Mini career (?) • Help out in the community • Give back to the sport 	Build on initiatives in some of the other sports – baseball, hockey. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-Line resources • Clinics unique to each level particularly new officials 	Give emphasis to this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find good people and develop them as educators and mentor-coaches • Revise entry level training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse needs to be more strongly recognized as unacceptable. • Awareness campaigns
What SGBs can do?	Develop a strategy within their sport and in cooperation with civic, regional bodies, other sports. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise entry level programs • Support in early stages • On-Line step by step to be an official or volunteer. • Provide services to Aboriginal people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look in the Sport 4 Life programs for a component • Develop strategic plan unique to your sport. • On-line presence, guidance for officials. • Coordinate with other sports, • Train clinicians • Service to Aboriginal people • Support the plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop people to mentor-coach officials • Make evaluations non-threatening and more developmental. • Redistribute resources to support officials. • Jamboree formats for remote/rural areas (official, coach, athlete) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply policies regarding abuse and disrespect • Insist on reporting of incidents • Support the officials
What clubs, teams, regional associations, etc. can do?	Identify potential officials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active athletes to officiate at lower levels, • Athletes and coaches leaving the sport • Family members of athletes • Community members, former athletes left sport, need encouragement to come back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with SGB's and other sports to develop a plan that works locally • "I saw an advertisement in the paper" – make your need known • Insist local officials are involved in officiating programs • Support involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsor events that include development and training opportunities for coaches, athletes, officials • Assist with costs to be an official, clinics, equipment, travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let key people know it is not a good practice; coaches, parents, spectators, players • Work to limit it • Encourage Better ways to interact with officials on questions • Better care and comfort for officials on site.
What Sask Sport can do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness – advertising, or adapt current advertising • Recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasis on strategic plan for official development by each PSGB • Assist in identifying resources to SGB's • Act as a cross discipline facilitator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in identifying resources to SGB's • Assist in outlining a mentor program • Act as a cross discipline facilitator • Officials' multi-sport conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in identifying resources to SGB's • Monetary incentives • Act as a cross discipline facilitator

Clarifying the Issues

The following table provides a brief overview of the response that received the highest percentage response on questions that were common to each e-survey. You are encouraged to read the entire survey results.

A complete summary of each of the three e-surveys is included in the attachments to this final report. The complete summaries include the response totals to each survey question and selected comments believed to be the majority opinions expressed in the survey.

Issue	PSGB	Officials	North / Tribal Councils
Are there adequate numbers of competent officials?	Yes but nearing end of career – 25% No, officials are very difficult to find – 25%	Yes but nearing end of career – 34% No, most officials are inexperienced – 41%	No, officials are very difficult to find – 100%
Is payment a determining factor?	Payment is adequate – 50%	Payment is adequate – 28%	Payment is adequate – 40%
Are officials' programs well promoted and understood?	Needs Improvement – 44%	Adequate 47%	No – 83%
How often are officials evaluated?	Depends on level higher level more often – 46%	Once in a while – 47%	
Who provides officials' training?	PSGB- 77%	PSGB – 40% ; Officials Assoc. – 36%	PSGB – 50%
How are officials recruited?	Encouragement from an official – 80%	Pursued on my own – 56%	
Mentor programs?	Yes when requested – 33% Yes for entry level- 33%	Yes the opportunity exists – 56% Yes I work with mentor – 19%	
How effective is recruiting and training?	Needs Improvement – 50%	Needs Improvement 52%	Limited opportunities, must travel south
Is abuse a deterrent to officials?	No rarely a problem – 46%	No, rarely a problem – 43%	No, rarely a problem – 68%
Most prevalent form of abuse?	Verbal 58%	Verbal 82%	Verbal 50%
Where do incidents of abuse originate?	Athletes – 35%	Coaches – 35%	Coaches – 33%
Is need for province wide multi-sport officials' organization?	Yes – 64%	No – 61%	Yes – 50% No – 50%
Top Issues affecting officiating	1. Mentorship & Training (financial/human resources) 2. Abuse 3. Lack of interest individuals wanting to officiate 4. Recognition	1. Cost of clinics (time & fees) 2. Mentor support (new & rural) 3. Lack of games, opportunities (not city) 4. Abuse – respect and support of official	1. Access to training 2. Lack of interest, individuals wanting to officiate 3. Mentor and supervision
Initiatives for Sask Sport	1. More funding for education and training 2. Recognition of officials 3. Funds to update resources (web & instructors)	1. Better training at lower cost 2. Increase funds mentorship & training 3. Recognition & public education program 4. Maintain anti-abuse campaigns	1. Insist PSGB service the north 2. More clinics 3. Campaign to promote officials