

2019 Plenary Sessions

Opening Plenary Session: Wednesday, April 10th - 1:30PM

ARE YOU A FUTURE-FOCUSED RECREATION LEADER? – Brenda Herchmer

The question each of us needs to ask is, “How do we become a future-focused leader who is in the now and in the know?” In addition to managing sound day-to-day operations, recreation staff and volunteers need to invest energy and resources to stay meaningful and relevant but also to prepare for a rapidly changing and often uncertain future.

Learning Objectives:

- Learn trends and strategies for being a more proactive and future-focused recreation leader.
- Gain examples and insights how for how other communities are providing future-focused recreation strategies for delivering individual, community and environmental wellbeing.
- Identify strategies for helping to align with the strategic priorities identified within the National Recreation Framework.

Brenda Herchmer Bio:

Brenda is a passionate community builder a social enterprise called Campus for Communities.

A speaker, trainer, and community development coach, she is also an avid blogger and the author of three books including *Community Building for Recreation Practitioners*. Previously she has worked for Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, the City of Niagara Falls, and was a Recreation Professor at Niagara

College where she also founded and managed the Niagara Centre for Community Leadership. Brenda has been acknowledged as a YWCA Woman of Distinction in Training and Education and won the 2016 Brock University Faculty of Applied Sciences Distinguished Graduate Award.

Thursday Morning Plenary Session: Thursday, April 11th – 9:00am

NATURE DEFICIT DISORDER: The importance of outdoor activity in the mental well being and development in children and youth – Dr. Sarah Gander

This session will explore the importance of physical activity, "nature deficit disorder" and the impact on the outdoors on measures of attention, behavior regulation, and mental well-being. Recent research on forest school environments, access to adequate green space and "outdoor classrooms" will also be discussed.

Dr. Sarah Gander Bio:

Dr Gander is a General Pediatrician in Saint John and the Clinical and Academic Department Head of Pediatrics. She is the Chair of the NB Social Pediatrics Research program and her interests mainly include the social determinants of health on outdoor forest schools and its effect on development and submitted a National

recommendation on greenspace considerations for children to the Canadian Pediatric Society. In her spare time, she enjoys many activities with her husband and two boys Eddie and David who attend Tir Na Nog Forest School in Saint John.

Closing Plenary Session: Friday, April 12th - 12:00PM

MENTAL ILLNESS – It's Time To Stop Being Weird About It – Zac Crouse

Why is it that we treat individuals with mental illness differently than we do those with an illness of the body?
How does stigma restrict treatment opportunities for those seeking to improve their mental health?

Zac discusses these questions and shares his personal experiences in dealing with our health system. His central message: recreation is essential for mental wellness; because it provides opportunities for regular physical activity and creative outlets within a framework that is more sustainable than traditional treatment approaches.

Zac encourages participants to explore their own passions and interests as a way of improving overall quality of life.

Zac Crouse Bio:

Zac Crouse (M.Ed, CTRS) is a recreation therapist, musician & expedition kayaker who delivers keynote presentations and workshops focusing on mental health, recreation and leadership.

Zac has a unique ability to discuss sensitive topics with respect and humour. His presentations are designed to engage and entertain the audience through stories, film and live music.



Zac has worked for over 17 years as a frontline practitioner with at-risk youth & families. He specializes in working with individuals who have mental health and substance use issues; and has an extensive background in adventure therapy and eco-therapy.

Zac has instructed at St. FX University for the Faculty of Education and at Dalhousie University for the Faculty of Health & Human Performance. Zac is a contributing author to Quality Lesson Plans in Outdoor Education (Human Kinetics). He has also acted as a consultant in Belize on a national citizenship curriculum for youth. Zac is currently an instructor at the University of Lethbridge Faculty of Health Sciences.