



Cricket Newfoundland and Labrador report to Cricket Canada

Cricket Newfoundland and Labrador, established in 2010, made significant strides in 2017-18, with expansion of membership, infrastructure improvements, coaching development, junior programming, development of community and government relationships and more. To date, all our programming has been in the greater St. John's area, and expanding to province wide remains a challenge.

Membership

Membership has shown a steady increase over the last 5 years, and in 2017 there were 115 active senior cricketers, and 20 junior cricketers in the province. The outdoor summer league had four teams, and indoor tape ball cricket proved very popular with over 100 taking part in the spring league.

Governance

The organization held its AGM in the autumn and approved a revised constitution, adding directors for each established club in the organization. This results in an enlarged but still manageable board of 10 people.

Volunteer recruitment and engagement, plus rapid turn over due to a large number of students in the membership remains a challenge.

During the hosting of the Eastern T20 good relationships were established with provincial government Ministers and local councilors, including the Mayor of St. John's.

Schools programme

Cricket NL has been working with schools for several years with a combination of short term demonstrations, and inclusion in after school programmes. A year long weekly after school session in a central St. John's elementary school attracts 20-25 participants, and a 6 week after-school session in another school exposed cricket to 45-50 elementary school kids. School visits resulted in cricket being demonstrated to perhaps 80 more kids.

The target group has been elementary schools, and the Cricket Canada Kids programme has been followed as far as possible. There's strong interest from local teachers, and expansion is mostly limited by availability of gym time and volunteers / coaches with availability during school hours. We hope to hold an inter-school tournament in May, which would be the first such event since the 1930s.

Junior programme

Building on the success of the schools programme, we launched a summer junior programme in 2017, running for 10 weeks with sessions twice/ week. 20 kids registered, with a wide range of ages (7 to 15). The programme was supported by a

grant from the City of St. John's. Most were from families with cricketing backgrounds but there were also some participants with no prior cricketing experience. The wide range of ages was a challenge for the programme, and meant, for safety reasons, the Canada Kids softball cricket programme was followed. Plans for 2018 include a small-scale programme to assist the older kids to transition to hard ball cricket, plus it is hoped that increased participation might mean separation into two groups or more by age.

Coaching

Support from the Coaching Association of Canada and Cricket Canada allowed Dave Liverman, the provincial coach, to take part in a learning facilitator's course in St. John, New Brunswick, allowing him to train community coaches using the curriculum developed by Cricket Canada. A community coaching course was held with 6 participants, who are currently working on competing NCCP requirements to become fully accredited. The NCCP programme is well supported in NL, with courses offered free of charge, but the lack of cricket specific courses and opportunities for coaching development beyond community level makes coaching development a challenge. The entire junior/ schools/ coach development programme owes a big debt to Cricket Canada, and specifically Zubin Surkari, the development officer, for his guidance and support.

Officiating

Officiating is a challenge for us with no formally trained and accredited umpires, and no opportunity to gain such accreditation without travel. Local matches are officiated by senior cricketers with a sound knowledge of the game, but this is no substitute for proper training.

Infrastructure

Cricket is played on just one ground in the province. The ground, in St. John's is close to full international size, and is reasonably well maintained. The outdoor season, due to weather, is short. A major step forward was made this summer with the installation of a concrete pitch at the ground. Previous seasons had been played on roll-out pitches- initially a Flicx pitch, followed by a Nottsport portable system. The total cost for this installation was close to \$16,000, and further expenses are anticipated (the pitch lies adjacent to a rugby field, and protective mats need to be purchased to allow safe use by rugby players). Pitch construction was only possible due to the generous support of Cricket Canada, the Maple Leaf Foundation and grants from the provincial government. The City of St. John's and provincial government were very supportive, and their influence was essential in the long and difficult process of getting permission for construction from the Airport Authority who own the ground.

The pitch project was led by Cricket NL Secretary, Gurman Khurana, who was tireless in his efforts to get this project done in time for the Eastern T20.

The pitch uses a Nottsport mat and pad designed for use over concrete imported from the UK (~\$4000). This has proven to be an excellent surface, significantly

better than concrete pitches with only a thin mat, with reasonable pace and good but not excessive bounce. This has greatly improved the quality of cricket in the province.

Cricket NL also invested in a lawn tractor (the field was never cut low enough for cricket), and with extensive volunteer hours can have a reasonable length outfield for matches. The general opinion of players visiting for the Eastern T20 is that this is now probably the best ground in eastern Canada.

There still is much to be done, as the ground lacks changing rooms and other facilities. Development is restricted as access to the ground is only guaranteed on a year to year basis by the St. John's Airport Authority who wish to reserve the area for possible future development.

Leagues

Cricket NL operates an outdoor hard ball league, plus indoor tape ball leagues over the winter. The outdoor league was contested between four teams, playing a T20 format. Games were competitive with the league well balanced, and close to 80 players taking part in at least one match during the summer.

Indoor tapeball cricket is popular, and in the spring league we had a record registration of 12 teams taking part each with a squad of 8-12 players.

Provincial/ HP programme

Indoor training following the direction provided at the 2016 HP camp took place weekly throughout the winter combined with fitness training. Attendance varied from 4-5 to 10-15, with a few dedicated individuals taking part in most sessions. Minimum fitness standards were established for the provincial team (5 km in under 30 minutes continuous run, and 7.5 score in the beep test). Most players trying out for the provincial team achieved or exceeded these.

Development of elite players is challenging because of the lack of competitive opportunities. The only inter-provincial competition is the Eastern T20, and there's no opportunity to test abilities at the national level. Although there is a small pool of talent in small provinces, there certainly is the possibility that some players could represent Canada. For this to occur Cricket Canada needs to provide a clear pathway to the national team- and support dedicated and talented cricketers through creating opportunities to play on grass wickets in the top leagues in Canada. The Eastern T20 and possible selection to the National T20 is a start but more needs to be done.

The provincial team performed well at the Eastern T20, placing third, but only narrowly missing out in the final due to losing to Nova Scotia in the last over of a thrilling match.

Going forward it has been disappointing to see Cricket Canada reduce Eastern participation at the National T20. At the Eastern T20 players were told that there would be a Quebec team, plus an Atlantic team selected to take part. This apparently

now has been reduced to a combined Eastern squad of 15 players who will be distributed amongst four equally balanced teams, and there have been suggestions that less than 15 will be invited.

Eastern T20

Cricket NL hosted the Eastern T20 for the first time in 2017. Hosting in Newfoundland represents a challenge for other provinces who have to find the funds to fly to St. John's, as opposed to other venues which are drivable. Cricket NL were able to cover costs of hosting, thanks to the Cricket Canada hosting grant, plus a grant from the provincial government, and the event, held in late July was a success. The weather co-operated, the ground was in excellent condition, and some competitive, high scoring matches were played. The support of Cricket Canada in providing qualified umpires made a big difference.

Recommendations/ concerns

There are a number of areas where the organization needs to develop and improve. These include:

- Development of women's cricket – we have a number of girls in the schools programmes but none in the junior programme and no senior female cricketers.
- Involvement of new cricketers; nearly all members come from cricket-playing non-Canadian backgrounds. We've had limited success in developing fully home-grown cricketers.
- Taking cricket province wide is a real challenge. This will only be possible if there's a nucleus of keen local cricketers to whom we can provide support. Population patterns in the province show growth mostly in the St. John's area.
- Proper indoor nets would make a big difference to development, but resourcing these for a small number of players will be challenging.

We also have some thoughts or recommendations for Cricket Canada to consider:-

- Development of resources for new clubs and organizations trying to get cricket started in a new venue, including ground and pitch specification, and guidance on governance
- Infrastructure support for pitch construction can make a tremendous difference for local cricket development
- The national T20 needs to emphasize participation from outside of the southern Ontario area. Players from central Canada have many opportunities to show their talents, and be seen by the selectors. In order to identify talent from outside of this area, players from both east and west, who have very limited opportunities, need to be seen. It is recognized that some may not be currently at the same level as those who might be excluded from central Canada, but there needs to be consideration of potential, and development through access to better coaching and facilities.
- There needs to be consideration of support for training officials in small and isolated communities using online resources.

- Coach development and training is the most effective way to develop grass-roots cricket.

Submitted by Dave Liverman (President), Saravana Kumar (Past-President)