

UNL Strategic Plan 2020-2022

What is Ultimate Frisbee?

Since its creation in the late 60s, ultimate frisbee has gained worldwide recognition as a fast-paced, low-cost sport that emphasizes sportsmanship through spirit of the game. It's easy to learn, requires little equipment, and can easily be played in any open space.

The basic skills of the game - throwing, catching, running and jumping - make for an easy transition for athletes from other sports, both team and individual.

Ultimate is a self-refereed sport with the onus on each player to ensure that other players and themselves are acting within the rules and abiding by the ideals of fair play and spirit of the game. It's built on the understanding of respect for all players on the field and that fair play is essential in creating an enjoyable playing experience.

Ultimate Newfoundland and Labrador

Ultimate NL was formed as a governing body for ultimate activities in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2004. More recently, in 2017, Ultimate NL obtained Provincial Sport Organization (PSO) status, and is now recognized by Sport NL as the organization in charge of directing ultimate activities in the province. Obtaining the PSO status has been a huge driver for the momentum of growth that ultimate frisbee is experiencing in the province, presenting the organization with funding, partnership and promotional opportunities.

The goal of Ultimate NL as an organization is to promote the growth and development of the sport of ultimate in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ultimate NL is run by a volunteer-led board of directors, complete with 10 Directors/ Members:

Board of Directors (as of October 2020):

President – Nicholas House

Vice President – Melissa Wheeler

Chief Financial Officer – Sarah Hoddinott

Communications Director - Susan White

Sport Development Director - Kathleen Sullivan

Tournaments & Events Director - Brandon Kilfoy

Youth Schools Director - Hilary Walsh

Youth Development & Competition Director - Luke Dyer

Volunteer Director - Kurtis Thornhill

Member at Large - Tori Kearney

Board members are assigned a specific role/ stream of activities and are responsible for ensuring that their area receives adequate attention and dedication. Ultimate NL currently

receives no funding for staff. All organizational duties and events are executed entirely on volunteers. As of 2019, all board members are based in St. John's.

At the end of the 2018 - 2019 membership year, Ultimate NL had the following adult membership breakdown. This data represents the athletes who participated in adult member leagues as defined in the following paragraph.

Age Group	Female	Male	Other
0 - 12	45	66	
13- 18	184	276	
19- 39	270	307	1
36 - 50	19	29	
50 +	4	4	
Total	522	682	1
Grand Total 2018 - 2019 Membership			1205

Ultimate NL serves as the umbrella organization that brings together all of the leagues and teams (for all age groups and genders) that are active in the province. To be a member of Ultimate NL, players pay an annual fee of \$30. The membership fees collected from players contribute to insurance coverage and greatly assist in the costs associated with running organizational events, including tournaments, leagues, clinics, outreach, coaching certification, travel grants, club team support, awards, and attending meetings at provincial and national levels.

The main leagues and travel teams that Ultimate NL are responsible for includes:

Adult Leagues and Groups:

Sanctioned:

- Mile Zero Ultimate (MZU) - mixed*
- MAUL (Men's Avalon Ultimate League) - open
- SWURL (St. John's Women's Ultimate Recreational League) - women's
- SOUL (St. John's Oldies Ultimate League)

Unsanctioned:

- Corner Brook Ultimate (official name being decided upon by the group) - mixed

- Gros Morne Ultimate

Competitive Traveling Teams:

- Regiment (adult) - open
- Storm* (junior) - open and women's
- Tempest (adult) - women's
- MUTT (Memorial University Traveling Team) (adult) - open
- Wreckhouse Ultimate (inactive) - mixed

*Ultimate frisbee team/ league compositions are categorized by mixed, open, or women's. While mixed hosts players of all genders, women's hosts only female-matching players. Open leagues/ teams most often consist of only male-matching players, however, players who identify as female-matching are also allowed to compete, thus making it "open" to any gender in terms of eligibility.

*Ultimate NL holds responsibility over NL Storm (junior competitive traveling team) but does not have influence over the operations of the adult competitive teams - Regiment and Tempest (but typically offers club team funding each summer season to assist with the costs of traveling to tournaments outside of the province). Ultimate NL hires and pays coaches for Storm, takes care of the tryouts and associated fees of field/ space rental for tryouts, practices, and development camps, books flights and accommodations for the team, and liaises with Ultimate Canada (national sport organization) over administrative requirements as Storm typically participates at the Canadian Ultimate Championships (CUCs) each summer season.

Ultimate NL also runs a number of development camps/ leagues for youth throughout the year. The vast majority of offerings for youth take place in St. John's. Youth opportunities are available for children 9 years of age and older (e.g. elementary, junior high, and high school level league offerings). Ultimate NL is incredibly active with and is the main driver for youth ultimate activities in the province. Similar to other provincial and national sport organizations, Ultimate NL is committed to LTAD (long-term athlete development). Ultimate Canada has created a LTAD model specific to the sport of ultimate that Ultimate NL uses when leading youth-specific events.

Adult leagues in the province are individual subsidiaries of Ultimate NL, are self-sufficient and require no organizational or operational input from Ultimate NL. Ultimate NL works closely with the adult leagues and frequently hosts or participates in working groups featuring representatives from the league boards for the betterment of the ultimate community. The ultimate community has a core group of dedicated volunteers that work together and are typically involved in the leadership of the adult leagues and adult competitive teams, some volunteers holding multiple positions of importance.

Ultimate NL is also responsible for training and certifying coaches in the province, and does so in collaboration with Ultimate Canada and its certification programming. Ultimate NL offers two streams of coaching courses currently: Community Initiation (led by Paolo Mascarin) and Competition Introduction (led by Erin Daly). Paolo Mascarin and Erin Daly are Ultimate Canada

certified and trained facilitators to run these courses in the province. To date, the coaching courses are only offered in St. John's.

Ultimate NL hosts at least two tournaments a year. HuckFest, an evening-long tournament that takes place during the holiday break, and Toilet Bowl, a day-long event that takes place in early September after the busy summer season comes to an end. The two tournaments offered by Ultimate NL take place in St. John's.

Ultimate frisbee is experiencing tremendous growth in Newfoundland and Labrador and there are more opportunities for Ultimate NL to take advantage of than ever before in its 15 year history. The board is looking to establish a set of goals to continue the success of the organization into 2021 in a variety of categories.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- Ultimate NL is the Provincial Sport Organization for ultimate frisbee in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Ultimate NL is a member of Sport NL (access to funding opportunities and promotional opportunities).
- Currently 847 Ultimate NL members in Newfoundland and Labrador.
- There are three thriving adult leagues in St. John's: MZU (mixed league), MAUL (open league), and SWURL (women's league). There are consistent leagues offered throughout the year (majority of the leagues are offered indoors but all three leagues offer outdoor summer leagues) with development opportunities mixed in as well (i.e. clinics).
- Ultimate NL offers a number of youth leagues throughout the year for a number of age ranges (9 years+).
- There are two successful adult traveling competitive teams in the province: Regiment (open) and Tempest (women).
 - Ultimate NL has the ability to provide funding to these traveling teams.
- NL Storm is the competitive junior program and is enjoying significant and impactful growth each and every year. In 2018, Storm sent a boys team and a girls team to CUCs (Canadian Ultimate Championships series). Each team had a paid coach and assistant coach.
- UNL activities are offered a number of times a year, i.e. tournaments, leagues, and clinics, and are typically well attended.
 - There are two new tournaments planned for 2019 including a 4v4 tournament and an Elim8s tournament. These tournaments will be offered along with Toilet Bowl and Huck Fest.
- The current makeup of the Ultimate NL Board of Directors is diverse (67% female; 33% male) and represents a number of teams, leagues, and skill sets.

- Financially, Ultimate NL is in a strong position to support its programs, coaches and volunteers to ensure its programs and leagues are successful and led by the best the province has to offer.

Weaknesses:

- Board of Directors are required to take care of all of the planning for activities, clinics, and tournaments. There are no employees working for UNL and everything is driven by volunteers.
- Ultimate NL has a limited volunteer base (i.e. the same volunteers are used in the majority of the events offered). Volunteer burnout may impede the success of future events.
- Areas of the organization may thrive or fail depending on the engagement and dedication of the volunteer board member in charge of a particular area.
- There is a limited number of trained coaches and mentors in the province. In order to continue growing the sport, Ultimate NL must continue to train coaches and continue fostering youth programs.
- Ultimate is a self-refereed sport that requires coaches and players to have an understanding of the rules of the game in order to be played properly. Players in St. John's have access to coaching courses and consistent league play, but players outside of the Avalon do not have the same opportunity to learn.
- Ultimate NL has made significant progress in terms of pan-provincial outreach but the majority of ultimate activities still take place in St. John's/ the Avalon peninsula.
- Ultimate NL has a reliance upon other organizations (i.e. City of St. John's for outdoor space and the Techniplex for indoor space) in terms of space rental and field agreements, i.e. it has no space of its own. League and clinic offerings are hindered by field space availability.
- Adult participation in Ultimate is largely dependent on the offerings of the member leagues (currently Mile Zero Ultimate, MAUL and SWURL), of which Ultimate NL has little influence over.

Opportunities:

- Ultimate frisbee has recently been named a varsity sport with School Sport NL giving the sport an opportunity to significantly increase its number of players pan-provincially.
- Ultimate NL is the provincial governing body (PSO) for ultimate frisbee activities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Players and volunteers are actively engaged with the organization and are committed to growing the sport in the province.
- The majority of ultimate activities take place in St. John's/ Avalon. Growing the sport into new regions of the province will increase the number of Ultimate NL memberships, increasing PSO revenue, allowing for more programs and services for the continued development of the sport.

Threats:

- Ultimate NL and subsidiary leagues rely heavily on the Techniplex and the City of St. John's for field space.
- Newfoundland and Labrador has a declining population and, therefore, a limited number of potential ultimate players. While ultimate offerings are quickly expanding across the province, youths and adults still have the opportunity to play in a number of other sports (hockey, soccer, and basketball associations boast the highest number of members in the province), which serves as competition to the growth of the sport.

Goals:

Executive:

The Board of Directors of Ultimate NL is paramount to the success of the organization. Currently, each board member is responsible for a particular area. Areas include: tournaments, sport development, youth - schools, youth - competition and development, and volunteers. Ultimate NL completes all organizational activities through volunteers. As is the nature of volunteer-led organizations, Ultimate NL relies heavily on the commitment and dedication of its volunteer base. If Ultimate NL were to have a paid employee on staff, the growth of the organization would accelerate. An employee of Ultimate NL could focus primarily on events, growth initiatives, and logistics to alleviate the responsibility of board members and volunteers.

The majority of Ultimate NL members are based in St. John's. Any player that registers for an adult league is required to purchase an Ultimate NL registration. In St. John's, the minimum age requirement for SWURL and MAUL is 16 years old and MZU is 17 years old. The local leagues of St. John's have lowered their minimum age requirements in the last few years with the intention of easing the transition for junior players to graduate from youth leagues to adult leagues. Funneling youth players to adult leagues will sustain the registration numbers of the current leagues and contribute to league growth in future years. Despite the adjustments made to the minimum age requirements, the number of Ultimate NL memberships has been declining over the past three years. While Ultimate NL does not control promotion and marketing done for the leagues, it has a significant online presence that can contribute to awareness of ongoing leagues. It is recommended that Ultimate NL work in conjunction with the leagues to determine why players are leaving the sport and what can be done to increase player retention. As a PSO, Ultimate NL may be able to create a committee of league representatives to complete a report for membership retention best practices. As ultimate continues to grow across the province, the membership base of the PSO will expand as Ultimate NL will have the opportunity to distribute memberships in regions of the province where it hasn't before.

Currently, there is a significant membership base in St. John's and the Avalon but there is a significant opportunity to develop the sport off the Avalon and in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Currently, every board member of Ultimate NL is based in St. John's. In order to

extend the presence of ultimate in the province and to support efforts to grow the sport, it is recommended that the Board of Directors expand to represent additional areas in the province by adding Member at Large positions for Central Newfoundland, Western Newfoundland, and Labrador. Having board members outside of the capital city will increase Ultimate NL's ability to successfully run growth and development initiatives pan-provincially and sustain the momentum achieved from events.

In order for Ultimate NL to capitalize on its unique position of being a relatively new sport to the province, it will have to increase its commitment to pan-provincial programming. The challenge currently lies in not having Ultimate NL representatives in every area of the province. It is recommended that Ultimate NL work with its networks and resources to determine players in regions of Newfoundland and Labrador that will help with program, league, and event expansion for the organization. To jump start this process, Ultimate NL may look to allocate some of its Sport Development budget to running clinics (rules knowledge, skills and drills) in specified areas with high growth potential in the province.

- Continue pursuing pan-provincial focus
 - Establish leagues in 2 new communities by 2021
- Reverse declining membership trend back to increasing numbers by 2021
 - Increase adult membership by 20%
 - Increase youth membership by 70%
- Hire a paid staff person for Ultimate NL by 2021
- Expand the Board of Directors to represent multiple regions of the province by 2021 (Members at Large for Central, Western, and Labrador regions)

Youth & Schools:

In the fall of 2018, ultimate was named a foundation sport with School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador (SSNL). This designation makes the sport of ultimate more accessible to all students in the province. Ultimate is a particularly good option for schools in rural areas with small populations as the format for games is mixed (i.e. all genders) 4v4, with a minimum team requirement of six players.

Ultimate NL's current long term goal is to have more students playing ultimate at varying levels of competitiveness. In order to achieve this goal, Ultimate NL has committed a significant number of volunteer hours and a significant portion of its operating income to increase access to the sport for youth, through offering provincial school tournaments, leagues, and development camps. Ultimate NL also provides support to coaches and teachers through providing equipment (discs and cones), teaching resources and lesson plans, coaching and skill development clinics, and funding to attend tournaments.

In March 2019, the first ultimate regional tournament in the province took place at Mount Pearl Senior High in Mount Pearl. Eight teams participated in the tournament. In early April 2019, a second regional tournament was hosted in Labrador West. Two additional tournaments in regions with no previous representation were held in Cow head and Twillingate with 3 and 6

teams participating. Also in April, a stand-alone ultimate tournament was organized at Brother Rice Junior High in St. John's without any involvement from Ultimate NL. The growth of the sport in the province is made evident by events such as these.

To take the sport of ultimate from foundation to varsity status, Ultimate NL will need to achieve certain criteria from SSNL:

- School representation must come from six different regions and at least four of those regions must be able to be part of a three-team qualifier;
- Schools involved in the foundation sport will be polled to ensure enough are interested to move up to official sport status; and
- Schools involved in the foundation sport that are interested in moving the sport to official sport status will be polled to determine if there is interest in playing in the same month in order to keep the participation level high and to get a qualifier and provincial tournament on the SSNL athletic calendar.

(If the criteria is not met, the sport will remain at foundation level for the following school year.)

The most important criteria needed to succeed in achieving varsity status through SSNL is for ultimate to have a pan-provincial presence. Varsity status can be revoked once obtained (sports must maintain varsity criteria for two consecutive years), so it is important that the foundation of the sport is established across Newfoundland and Labrador so that there will be no regression back to foundation sport.

As this report has detailed, Ultimate NL will need to commit its organizational efforts to expanding ultimate programming and activities outside of the Avalon. The Ultimate NL board of directors may consider creating a subcommittee dedicated exclusively to expanding ultimate activities pan-provincially to ensure this goal is met.

Rules Knowledge

The number of ultimate programs in schools is steadily increasing and the quality of the coaching and programming is improving. As has been discussed, ultimate is a self-officiated sport that relies on players to make game calls without the assistance of referees. To facilitate the learning curve of creating an ultimate program, Ultimate NL is quite involved in the process of assisting schools and municipalities launch ultimate initiatives. Disseminating educational materials and information about the rules of ultimate is absolutely integral to the process of establishing a strong base and foundation for the sport in subsequent years.

Currently, anyone in the province that is interested in establishing an ultimate program or team in their area can send a request to Ultimate NL to receive discs and learning materials. Sharing learning materials is a great place to start for rule knowledge, but it is recommended that Ultimate NL commit more time and energy to ensure the people that are growing the sport pan-provincially have an accurate and factual understanding of the rules of the game. A number of organizations across the country (including Ultimate Canada) have resources regarding rules

(e.g. videos) that can easily be compiled and distributed to gym teachers and coaches that are interested in teaching the sport to new players.

A recommendation for Ultimate NL is to create a rules knowledge clinic. The clinic will be run in a classroom setting and the curriculum will include education and discussion regarding essential rules of ultimate (i.e. picks, fouls, travels, best perspective, etc.). Ultimate NL has an existing rules knowledge test that can also be administered during this clinic. This clinic should be run in a number of regions in the province. Running the Community Initiation and Competition Introduction coaching courses in areas outside of the Avalon region is also recommended.

It is integral that Ultimate NL sets the stage for the continued growth of the sport in schools and will likely be heavily involved in this process for at least the next two years. Ultimate NL is the leading expert on the sport in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and will need to expend considerable effort in this crucial stage of sport growth and development. By 2021, it is recommended that Ultimate NL consider if its involvement in school programs is sustainable, or if SSNL (and individual schools) will be able to continue the process without Ultimate NL intervention. For now, Ultimate NL must continue to work diligently to educate leaders in the community with a strong baseline knowledge of game rules and information regarding spirit of the game.

- Continue offering 3 leagues per year for youth in the age categories of grades 3-6,7-9, and 10-12
 - Add additional leagues for each age group
- Increase the number of ultimate frisbee teams in Newfoundland and Labrador schools from 33 to 60 by 2021.
- Promoted from SSNL foundation sport to varsity sport for ultimate frisbee in Newfoundland and Labrador schools by 2021
- Have outdoor 7v7 mixed ultimate be accepted as a foundation sport under SSNL by 2021

Storm & Elite Youth:

Ultimate NL currently has full control of the Storm and elite youth programming offered in the province. Ultimate NL hires and pays coaches for Storm, takes care of the tryouts and associated fees of field/ space rental for tryouts, practices, and development camps, books flights and accommodations for the team, and liaises with Ultimate Canada over administrative requirements as Storm typically participates at the Canadian Ultimate Championships (CUCs) each summer season.

In 2019, Ultimate NL has plans to separate Storm financial activity from Ultimate NL financial activity by setting up its own bank account. This will allow for more accountability in keeping track of finances spent by and for the Storm team, including sponsorship. For the 2019 summer season, Storm has received a \$10,800 sponsorship from Veterinary Specialty Centre of Newfoundland and Labrador. This funding is being used to reduce player costs for jersey kits, to book field space for tryouts and practices, to increase the coaching stipend, and to give players

access to a strength and conditioning program. Corporate sponsorship allows for financial dedication to development and alleviates the strain on the Ultimate NL operating budget.

While the number of players trying out for Storm teams has increased over the last few years, there will need to be a continued and consistent effort to develop the skills of the competitive level youth athletes in the province. At the 2018 Junior CUCs, the women's Storm team did not win any games and finished 20th out of a pool of 20 teams. The open team finished 20th out of a pool of 24 teams. The coaches of the 2019 Storm teams are committed to the long term development of Storm athletes in the province and will look to focus on skills during the training season. A consideration of the board going forward will be to continue to offer development opportunities to junior players throughout the year, either by hiring coaches for one to two year terms or by offering clinics, leagues etc. through Sport Development more regularly.

- Send an open's team and women's team to CUCs representing Newfoundland and Labrador in 2019, 2020, and 2021
 - Aim to have full Newfoundland and Labrador representation on both rosters (i.e. rosters complete with players local to the province) by 2022
 - Aim for a top-half finish at CUCs for Storm teams by 2022
- Offer additional development opportunities to junior players that have potential to play for Team Canada:
 - Storm Development Camp
 - Camp offered to athletes seeking advanced skill development

Sport Development & Competition:

- Commit to the development of new players to the sport at any age by offering learning series and development clinics
- Continue to support the competitive players in the province by offering: financial reimbursement for traveling; access to coaching courses; profiles/ stories on Ultimate NL social feeds, the Ultimate NL website, and newsletters
- Send 1-2 teams representing Newfoundland and Labrador to C4UC in 2019, 2020, 2021
 - Standardize process for team selection by 2020
- Have NL teams place in the top 8 at CUCs/ C4UC by 2022

Tournaments & Events:

- Increase number of tournaments typically offered by Ultimate NL from 2 to 4 by 2020
 - Current anticipated offerings are an indoor 5x5 hat tournament, indoor 4x4 team tournament, outdoor elimination 8's tournament, outdoor hat 5x5 tournament.
- Host a tournament that features participation from other Canadian provinces by 2022
- Host the Ultimate Canada Conference by 2023

Equity, Inclusion & Spirit of the Game:

- Aim to offer WFDF Rule A in all Ultimate NL tournaments in 2019 onwards

- Set gender ratio to WFDF Rule A in youth tournaments in 2020 onwards
- Work with indigenous youth and adult groups to promote the sport

Community & Sport NL Involvement:

- Become an active member of Sport NL by attending their annual AGM and interacting with other PSOs
- Come forward with 1-2 talking points at each Sport NL AGM in an effort to put Ultimate NL in the minutes and therefore increase organizational recognition.

Work Plan:

With the creation of a strategic plan, it is important to stay on task with action items in a timely fashion in order to achieve the goals that have been identified. Given that Ultimate NL meets every month, designated persons in charge of action items should be required to give progress reports at every meeting in an effort to keep people on task and accountable.

Evaluation:

To quantify the success and progress of completion for the strategic plan, Ultimate NL may wish to use an evaluation metric to measure results. Results are best measured through tangible factors, so it is recommended to determine the success of each goal through quantifiable items.