



## Rhythmic gymnastics classes start

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Northern News Services

Published Thursday, October 16, 2008

LIIIDLII KUE/FORT SIMPSON - Megan Rawles is happy to be teaching her life-long passion - rhythmic gymnastics - to kids in the community.

"I love the sport," she said. "I love what it does for kids and their physical level. I think it's great for this community."

Rhythmic gymnastics is a sport where competitors manipulate one of the five available apparatuses - rope, hoop, ball, clubs or ribbon. Competition can be done individually, in duos, trios or up to five competitors using one or two of the apparatuses.

Having coached for more than 15 years and competed at the national level in 1991 at the Canada Winter Games, Rawles said the sport can be learned easily.

"The nice thing about rhythmic gymnastics is anyone can do it from any level of ability," she said.

"There is no previous experience needed; it's a good sport that way. It can build co-ordination as well as agility and flexibility."

Rawles said it's beneficial to the community because it's new to the people here and it gives a new activity for the youth to get into, especially the girls.

"There isn't much for girls to do that's a little more creative," she said. "I'm looking forward to teaching these classes."

Classes run every Thursday night at the recreation centre in the village. They started on Oct. 9 and will run for 10 weeks up to the last class on Dec. 11.

The program Rawles runs is based on the Alberta-developed prism system. She learned the system when she was a coach in Alberta before moving to Fort Simpson.

"For each set of skills the kids accomplish, the kids receive a pin," she said. "It's very similar to the system they have in artistic gymnastics where they receive a badge. So we'll be working on skills from that system."

The program was developed so recreational gymnasts could be recognized for their accomplishments and allow them to set personal goals for skill development.

The system is divided into seven categories: Rainbow, Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue and Violet. Each colour has a minimum 23 skills, with some of the more advanced levels having up to 44 skills to be completed. Once a gymnast has completed 90 per cent of the skills in a level they receive a ribbon for their success.

Since this is the only registered rhythmic gymnastics group in the territory, Rawles hopes to offer coaching clinics to help make the sport more accessible to people in Northern communities.

"I'm currently trying to get my certification so I can train coaches," she said. "Once I get that I hope to run some coaching programs in the Territories."



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