

# **NATIONAL KARATE ASSOCIATION (NKA)**

## **Strategic Planning Retreat**

March 6 – 8, 2009  
Toronto, Ontario

Facilitated by Rachel Corbett and Steven Indig, Centre for Sport and Law

### **NOTES FROM RETREAT**

The NKA brought together its National Council, chairs of key committees, athlete representatives and select provincial and territorial representatives for a strategic planning retreat in March 2009. The group was small, numbering about 20 participants. This is the first time the NKA had convened such a meeting.

The purpose of the retreat was, firstly, to take first steps towards the creation of a strategic plan. Secondly, there has been interest within the NKA to consider long overdue governance changes, and these issues were also part of the discussion. Thirdly, the retreat offered an opportunity for leaders within the sport to gather, discover common ground, put aside past differences, and set the stage for moving forward more positively.

On the **Friday evening** of the weekend, Rachel Corbett made a one-hour presentation to the participants, sharing her fifteen years of experiences of 'building success' with National Sport Organizations ("NSOs"). The purpose of the presentation was to open eyes and minds to some realities, promising practices, trends and bold ideas for the sport sector generally. The presentation covered the 'Seven Sins' of organizational dysfunction and included an introduction to the concept of 'management by values'. The presenter emphasized the importance of organizational values as 'glue' that holds an organization together when it is confronted with the need for change or when the surrounding environment is challenging, turbulent and complex.

**Saturday morning** began with a review of the current reality of the NKA. Building on the presentation from the evening before, the participants discussed indicators of success for the NKA and agreed on six indicators that they felt were relevant to the NKA in its present circumstances. These indicators are the following:

- Improved internal and external communications.
- Harmony and cohesiveness within the NKA and between sport and traditional karate.

- Engaged and stable association in terms of governance, policies, transparency, communications, office and staff.
- Promotion of the NKA brand and raising its profile nationally and internationally.
- Delivering standardized programs to the ordinary NKA member (athlete, coach, referee, administrator, club).
- Undertaking a competition review to optimize timing and number of tournaments.

In essence, these important indicators serve as possible benchmarks for measuring the progress of the NKA going forward.

The participants also reviewed initial results from a Membership Survey that had been put out to the members approximately one month before the retreat. A total of 173 people completed this questionnaire, which is a very respectable response rate. Of this number, 139 completed an English questionnaire while 34 completed a French language questionnaire, suggesting that about 20 percent, or one in five of the respondents, were from Quebec. The detailed results of the Membership Survey are available in a separate report.

The facilitators then introduced the concept of Values-Based Strategic Planning, which along with management by values, places a strong emphasis on vision, mission, values and principles to guide planning and actions.

The participants also reviewed a number of guiding statements from other sport organizations, and spent considerable time reflecting on personal and professional values and how these could be translated to meaningful organization values. As a result of this work, the following vision, mission and values were agreed to by the end of the day:

### **VISION**

(A compelling description of an ideal future)

***Karate Canada – working together to be the voice and image leading Canadian karate***

### **MISSION**

(This is a concise description of our core purpose)

***Karate Canada is committed to lead, communicate, develop and deliver programs of high standard to our membership. Through our Provincial & Territorial Branches we support our members to achieve their full potential in karate.***

## VALUES

(These are core beliefs that guide our actions, policies and decision-making)

**Respect** – *we treat each other respectfully; we welcome people from all walks of life, backgrounds and abilities; we appreciate effort as well as results.*

**Creativity and Innovation** – *we are receptive to new ideas; we will lead, not follow; and we are committed to continuous learning.*

**Integrity and Fairness** – *we deliver on our promises and own up to our mistakes; our policies are applied consistently; procedures and decisions are transparent.*

**Courage and Commitment** – *we are passionate about pushing boundaries; overcoming obstacles; standing up for our values and beliefs.*

On the **Sunday morning**, the Sport Canada consultant assigned to NKA (Sean O'Donnell) joined the meeting and provided an informative presentation on Sport Canada's programs, policies and expectations, and also shared Sport Canada's concerns about and priorities for the NKA. Key issues for Sport Canada are updating the governance structure of the NKA by establishing a new Constitution and Bylaws, and providing greater stability for the organization by moving towards creating a national office supported by staff.

Following the Sport Canada presentation and lengthy discussion about funding issues, and with the facilitators' help, the participants came to consensus on **two priority action areas** for 2009-2011:

1. *Establish a sound governance model and create stability for the NKA through a national office and staff.*
2. *Engage provincial/territorial branches in key NKA activities.*

These priority areas are explained in more detail below.

### **Priority 1 – Establish sound governance structure and polices, and achieve stability for the NKA through creation of a national office with staff.**

#### *1.1 Update Constitution and Bylaws*

NKA will create a member survey to solicit feedback on options for the future board of directors and voting structure of the NKA. (Note the NKA is currently governed by a National Council but there is desire to use a different terms in the future governance structure). Based on feedback, new bylaws will be developed by the Centre for Sport and Law for review by the Executive and

the existing National Council. New Bylaws require a 60-day notice period so any proposal has to be ready for distribution to members by the middle of May.

### *1.2 Develop and approve new policies*

With help from the Centre for Sport and Law, the Executive will create updated policies to fulfill Sport Canada requirements, to be approved by the existing National Council at the earliest opportunity through an e-mail vote.

### *1.3 Establish office and hire a staff person*

This is a priority for Sport Canada, and without this stability and continuity many of the other goals and objectives of the NKA will not be achieved. The Executive will study options for establishing an office (stand alone office versus virtual office versus office paired with an existing sport organization office) and hiring a staff person (full-time versus part-time, employee versus contractor). The timeline to complete this process and to have an office and staff ready to go is early September 2009. NKA will commit to inviting an independent person to provide feedback on the development of the job description and to assist with recruitment and hiring.

### *1.4 Change the name*

With the assistance of the Centre for Sport and Law, the NKA will investigate changing its name to Karate Canada and obtaining trademark protection of this name. There may be some hurdles in this process as a competing organization bearing a similar name already exists. There may also be options to retain NKA as the legal name and to use a different name for all other purposes: this would be similar to NSOs like Synchro Canada (Canadian Amateur Synchronized Swimming Association is the legal name) and Rowing Canada Aviron (Canadian Amateur Rowing Association in the legal name). Interestingly, Judo Canada is the operating name for an organization legally known as Canadian Kodokan Black Belt Association.

## **Priority 2 - Engage provincial/territorial branches in key NKA activities**

### *2.1 Create new NKA website*

It is agreed that the ancient NKA website needs replacing, not simply upgrading. This will require budget dollars. NKA must commit to engaging a professional to develop a new web site. NKA will publish a Request for Services by end of July 2009, select web site provider by September 15, 2009, launch new web site by November 30, 2009. The new website will be designed for easy maintenance by NKA staff and volunteers.

### *2.2 Launch a quarterly online newsletter for members*

Create a budget to support this initiative through a volunteer honorarium of \$1000 to \$1500 per year. Solicit proposals from interested volunteers over the summer, for the first issue of the newsletter to be launched with the web site on November 30, 2009. Execute a contract with the volunteer. It is

important that the newsletter be timely and reliable, which is more likely to be achieved in the presence of a healthy honorarium.

### *2.3 Convene a Karate Summit in 2010*

NKA must commit to separating governance meetings from National Championships in order to improve the quality of both events. This will help to make the meetings more productive and would also enable athletes and coaches to focus on the championships. Such a meeting would create an opportunity for the National Council and committees to meet face to face, would engage members, and could be the platform to deliver coaches training, referees training and volunteer professional development. Consider ways to reduce the costs to travel to such a meeting – holding it in Las Vegas is a creative, and cost-effective option! Establish a Summit Task Force to begin planning for this event for February 2010 – and seek to make this an annual exercise thereafter each Spring.

### *2.4 Begin work to create a grass roots national program to introduce youth and beginners to karate.*

A template/model has already been developed in BC using funding from Legacies Now Society ('Fitness 4 Defense', a program for girls aged 11-13). NKA can build on this to design a national program. Benefits of such a program are many: it provides excellent value to members, has potential to grow membership, is appealing to a corporate sponsor, and is something that Sport Canada would view very favorably for financial support. NKA will establish a Working Group to begin a feasibility study – this project would be a priority for future NKA staff. It is understood that this goal may require several years to achieve.

### *2.5 Compile national membership database*

While this is a priority, it was recognized that the logistics will require staff leadership to drive this project. Sport Canada is also examining the feasibility of providing software tools and other support to help NSOs improve this area. This will be a work in progress over the coming years. The first priority will be to communicate with provincial and territorial branches the information needs that the NKA will have, especially in relation to the LTAD categories and divisions.

The retreat concluded at **mid-day on Sunday**. In closing, it must be observed that despite recent struggles and differences within the Executive and National Council, the weekend was overall a very positive experience for all participants.

This report summarizes the very broad strokes for a strategic direction for the NKA for 2009-2011. The board of directors, executive and committees need to communicate this plan and prepare more detailed initiatives, actions, timelines, budgets and work plans to advance the two priority areas and move forward on the broad strategies.