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Working it out

Flex your career muscles as a personal fitness trainer or yoga teacher

BY NOA GLOUBERMAN

Canada's fitness industry was worth over \$2.1 billion last year. Metro Vancouver, it seems, takes a large slice of that (albeit low-fat) pie.

According to **StatsCan**, British Columbians are tops in the country when it comes to living healthy lifestyles, working out regularly and participating in various physical activities. That's good news if you're thinking of becoming a personal trainer or yoga teacher.

PERSONAL TRAINERS

You've seen them working with clients individually or in groups, in gyms or outdoor settings. **Andre Noel Potvin**, president of **INFOFIT Educators**, says there's a growing need for fitness trainers.

"Recent labour statistics reported a 27% shortage of personal trainers with an increased public demand of 28%," Potvin reveals. "Many large fitness clubs are in desperate need of personal trainers because they have such a large demand from their membership."

David Munro, faculty program manager at **Douglas College's Sports Institute** – the largest

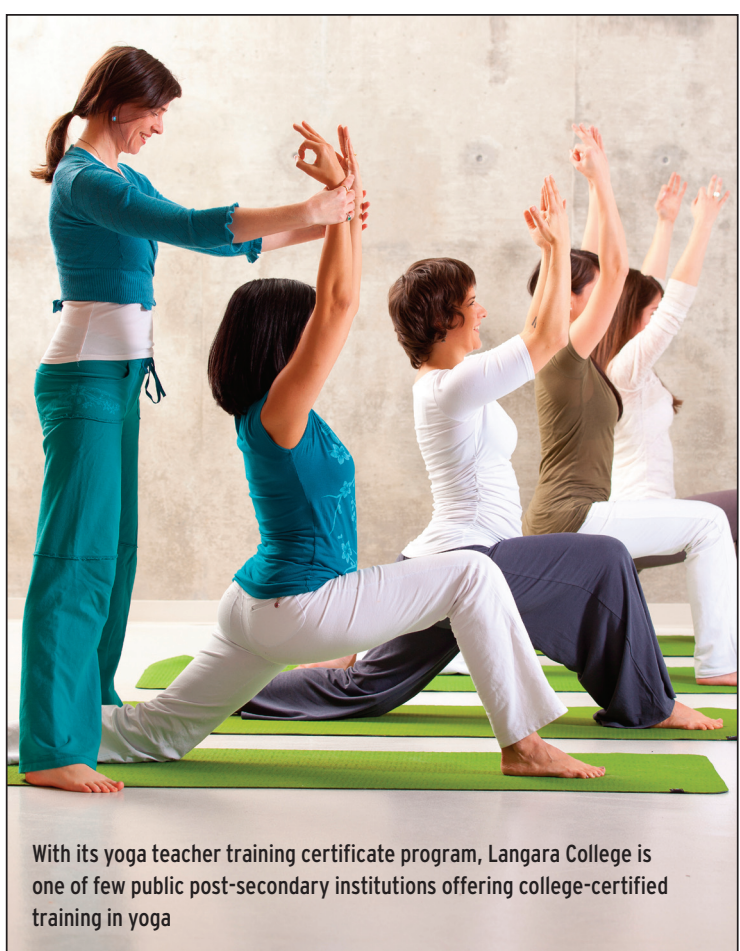
producer of **BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA)**-recognized courses for fitness professionals – agrees.

"B.C. is a fairly healthy climate ... so people are always looking to get in shape, recover from an injury or train for elite performance," explains Munro. "Following the Olympics there was a bit of momentum in terms of healthy living. There were additional facilities built ... that remain as a means of promoting a healthy community."

"Many large fitness clubs are in desperate need of personal trainers"

– Andre Noel Potvin, president, INFOFIT Educators

Also, after the recession, "people were discovering they could get additional employment and income by being a personal trainer, even if it was just on the side. And the investment, just over \$1,000 for our program, was better than going back to school for two to three years to open up other opportunities."



With its yoga teacher training certificate program, Langara College is one of few public post-secondary institutions offering college-certified training in yoga

LANGARA COLLEGE CONTINUING STUDIES

While there's no legislation requiring personal trainers to become certified with the BCRPA (the registering body in B.C.), **Donna Hutchison**, CEO of **On the Edge Fitness Educators Inc.**, warns that "the trainer without any certification will not be insured and therefore liable."

Adds Potvin: "Most trainers need to use a fitness facility to work

out of and these facilities, for liability purposes, require certification and insurance coverage documentation."

To become a BCRPA-registered personal trainer, you must complete the following steps (described in more detail and with fee information on the BCRPA website, www.bcrpa.bc.ca):

- pass the BCRPA fitness theory

- examination;
- obtain CPR and first aid certifications;
- submit the BCRPA fitness leader – fitness theory registration form;
- enrol in a weight training specialty module;
- complete all weight training course requirements;
- complete all weight training practicum and instructor competency evaluation requirements;
- register with the BCRPA in weight training;
- complete 20 beginner-level programs (i.e., resistance training, flexibility training or cardio training programs);
- enrol in a personal training specialty module;
- complete all personal training course requirements;
- pass the BCRPA personal training exam;
- complete all personal training instructor competency evaluation requirements; and
- register with the BCRPA in personal training.

The required programs are offered by BCRPA-approved training providers, including – among others – INFOFIT, Douglas College, On the Edge and Vancouver's **Inshape Training**.

"We offer training toward our local BCRPA registration as a personal training and group fitness instructor, but we're also offering training for CFES certification, which is **Canadian Fitness Education Services**, our national certification"

see Yoga, 2

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Yoga teacher training programs a “growing market” in B.C.

from Working, 1

cation,” says InShape owner/operator **Sandra Seary**. “As well, these programs will prepare students for American certifications.”

It may take from three months to two years to complete all of the requirements but, “once certified, you get your BCRPA certificate and have \$2 million liability insurance, which is essential to be hired by any other association,” says Munro. “Imagine a weight room hiring someone without insurance – not likely.”

Pay for personal trainers, he adds, varies. “Those working for facilities, the city or parks and recreation could be at an entry-level position: \$16 to \$18 per hour. Or they could move into a fitness programming role, which might be salaried and full time.”

If you’re entrepreneurial, Munro says, “the sky’s the limit.” Some will train multiple clients simultaneously, at \$40 an hour per client, but “that takes knowledge, being organized and well liked. People who start might be training at \$25 per hour, but someone working in Yale-town or downtown businesses might charge \$60. It really depends.”

The challenge with self-employment, however, is drumming up enough business for yourself.

“You need to be a ‘go-getter’ ... to promote and sell your services,” Potvin advises. “Most trainers don’t like to sell, nor do they possess the business skills to maintain a steady full-time training business.”

In this sense, personality may be key.

“The personality of a personal trainer is almost more important than their education,” says Hutchinson. “Of course, education is necessary and required, but the best personal trainers are ones that can really connect with their clients, have a high degree of empathy and understand the processes of behavioural change.”

One thing’s for sure: personal training offers a plethora of job opportunities.

“With our aging population and trend toward obesity, this is an excellent, rewarding and lucrative career,” Seary says. “I can’t say enough positive about it, and B.C. is the best place to do this in Canada ... we are so

active here.”

YOGA TEACHERS

“The demand for yoga teachers is growing,” confirms **Gloria Latham**, owner of **Semperviva Yoga Studios** in Vancouver, which offers teacher training programs through its Semperviva Yoga College. “Teachers may find employment in yoga studios, teaching corporate yoga where they will visit offices to teach, in schools, outreach clinics ... most are self-employed contractors.”

“Now is an excellent time to become a yoga teacher,” agrees **Naseem Gulamhusein**, who co-ordinates the yoga teacher training certificate program at **Langara College** – one of few public post-secondary institutions offering college-certified training in yoga.

“Teaching yoga is a growing profession brought about by the popularity of yoga and its broad range of health benefits within our society,” Gulamhusein adds. “Yoga teacher training programs are a growing market in B.C. and around the world.”

Those best suited to the job, she notes, are positive, confident, energetic and compassionate, possess a commitment to the deeper meaning of yoga and, often, an interest in holistic health and healing.

“Teaching yoga is a path of service, so it’s important to care more about the student than yourself,” echoes Latham. “There should be genuine passion for the practice and a true desire to share it.”

Though she admits that “those who already have experience being in front of groups – teachers, dancers, actors – sometimes have an easier start to teaching ... they don’t always make the best teachers in the long run because they’re used to being performers, which is very different from being a teacher.”

Different styles of yoga, Latham adds, attract different teaching personalities. “For instance, Yin yoga is a quieter, more meditative practice, whereas Vinyasa Power Flow is more vibrant.”

No matter what type you choose to teach, you must complete at least 200 hours of training to become a certified yoga instructor. The average cost: between \$2,500

and \$4,000. But beware: not all training providers are created equal.

“There is currently no certification body for the profession of yoga,” explains Gulamhusein. “Many programs are registered through the American **Yoga Alliance**, which ... isn’t a professional certifying body – only a yoga teacher and yoga school registry.”

However, locally, “many private yoga training schools are now registered with the **Private Career Training Institutions Agency of BC** [PCTIA] to ensure consumer protection to students,” she says, adding that a qualified yoga teacher training program often includes:

- a clear student admission process;
- experienced (over 10 years) and expert instructors working in the field;
- classroom hours and practicum experience;
- comprehensive training and professional experience; and
- a certification process with course objectives, learning outcomes and evaluation

“Teaching yoga is a growing profession”

– Naseem Gulamhusein,
senior yoga teacher,
Langara College

methods.

Once you have completed training you may begin teaching. Teachers, in general, are paid per class, and the rate can vary from \$20 to \$50 for newer teachers and up to \$100 for more senior instructors.

While there’s no personal limit to how much you can teach, Gulamhusein says one of the main challenges associated with being a yoga teacher is the competition you’ll face from others vying for work.

The rewards, however, seem well worth it.

“Yoga teacher training is much more than just ‘job training,’” Latham says. “It is an incredible journey of self-discovery. The practice will give you many tools to live a full and rich life, with a lot less stress. It’s the best personal development program I know of.” ■

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