



RIGHT TO PLAY

Promoting Life-Skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) Program 2021-2022 YEAR IN REVIEW





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LETTER FROM A RIGHT TO PLAY PARTICIPANT



Sam

Right To Play
Participant

Hello; my name is Sam, and my pronouns are he/him. I am 16 years old, and I am from a community in Northwestern Ontario. I love living in my community because it is small but with opportunities. Our community is evolving with more programs inviting community members out.

Sports bring the youth together during our Right To Play program. Playing sports makes me feel active and more connected to my peers. Thanks to my experience with our Right To Play program, I do not make the same mistakes other people do that were not part of the program, I have built new skills, such as leadership skills, and made more friends. I learned about the families in our community and how to treat people. I learned how to become more of a people-person and how to interact with different kinds of people. I have learned more about myself too.

All these kids on my reserve, they do not have a role model to look up to, but I had Justin (my Community Mentor). He is the reason I am the person I am today. This is why I would love to help kids and encourage them to participate in the program. I felt motivated to volunteer or work to facilitate sports sessions for other youth and help Ziggy (the new Community Mentor).

In the future, I want to study a degree related to youth development, so I can come back to my community and be a youth counsellor. I want to be able to do more.

FROM RIGHT TO PLAY'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS



**RACHEL
MISHENENE**

Executive Director &
Anishinaabe blood-
born to
Mishkeegogamang
First Nation and
member of
Eabametoong First
Nation

In AuguBooshoo and greetings!

2022 has been an amazing year, especially with the opening of travel and opportunities to meet and work in-person with community partners and donors.

Over the last couple of years, many people, both in Canada and globally, have had personal challenges and suffered devastation and loss due to COVID. Maintaining strength and unity through self-care and positive interpersonal approaches was an essential practice that helped me, personally, through these challenging times. I am in awe and humbled to see the work and commitment that the Indigenous Programs team was able to accomplish during these times and in partnership with you. I am grateful that we were all able to work through these times, and I'm grateful for the community and loved ones that have supported each of us to be here today to continue our work in serving children and youth.

In 2022, the Indigenous Programs team has grown and shifted, the play-based program is in a transition year, and we have finally kicked off into a new strategic plan. Many changes have happened and the team is ready to embark on this new journey together. Working in collaboration with community partners and Indigenous peoples will bring new programming approaches, practices and ideas to the forefront. All of this is in response to collective feedback from Community Mentors and the children and youth served.

A few areas of emerging growth include, partnering with Indigenous scholars and community partners to develop a framework for a land-based program where Community Mentors can build capacity and sustainability in program development. This would be culturally responsive to their unique worldviews and cultural practices and traditions. In partnership with the Chang School and Toronto Metropolitan University (previously known as Ryerson), Community Mentors have an opportunity to participate in a one-year certification program designed by Indigenous curriculum experts and scholars for RTP Community Mentors. In consultation and in working collaboration with Indigenous researchers and disability experts, the Indigenous Programs practices and approaches around data and community engagement will be revisited to define our path forward as we move in a journey and commitment in reconciliation. Youth leadership is another focus for our team to foster learning and networking opportunities for Indigenous youth to build leadership and advocacy skills. The work we do in collaboration and partnership with Indigenous communities across Canada is for children and youth, and the Indigenous Programs team is committed to building reciprocity in personal and team growth, to support in the best way that we can.

With travel restrictions opening up, we are now embarking on a new journey to provide in-person programming and training once again. In October and November, the Indigenous Programs team will be meeting with Community Mentors across Canada to foster and build relationships based on commitment to serving children and youth with programming that is fun, engaging and builds confidence. It is with great appreciation that we have this opportunity to work alongside each other.



A YEAR OF PLAY

September 2021 - August 2022

Sep

Programs Launch

Programs launch in 75 partner communities across Canada

Community Mentor (CM) Hub launches for partners to access program materials online



Oct-Dec

Fall CM Training

80 CMs & youth workers from five provinces across Canada attend remote fall training

Physical Literacy Resource launches



Jan

Winter Training

33 CMs attend remote winter training

25 CMs begin Indigenous Child & Youth Engagement Certificate through Toronto Metropolitan University

Mar

Youth Employment Project

Youth Employment Project (YEP) year two wraps

Traditional and Land-Based Sport Project wraps in Walpole Island First Nation & Kenora Chiefs Advisory in Ontario

37 youth workers complete Mental Health First Aid course

Apr

Gender Equity Training

Nine youth workers from five partner communities participate in a gender equity ball hockey training with Right To Play staff and Edmonton Oilers



52 CMs from six provinces attend remote summer training

Right To Play staff resume in-person community visits after two+ years

Five CMs attend a remote LEGO training session

Summer Training

May

Four youth from four partner communities awarded the Ted Rogers Scholarship Fund

Ciara Lewis, CM from Squamish Nation (Valley) awarded 2022 Youth Hero Award at Right To Play Heroes Gala

Four youth across Indigenous Programs share their voices for National Indigenous Peoples Day

Scholarships Awarded

June

Local youth-led initiative events take place in 17 partner communities

Three partner communities host Painted Turtle Arts Camps

Nine CMs and youth from five partner communities participate in Gender Equity ball hockey camp

Youth-Led Initiative

July



Two communities host Painted Turtle Arts Camps

Summer programming wraps up

Program Year-End

Aug



PLAY'S REACH



Across Canada, PLAY Reached:

3283

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WERE REACHED

through regular PLAY programs

1116

CHILDREN AND YOUTH WERE REACHED

through regular modified programming

52%

of children & youth reached through PLAY programs

ARE GIRLS OR GENDER NON-BINARY

124

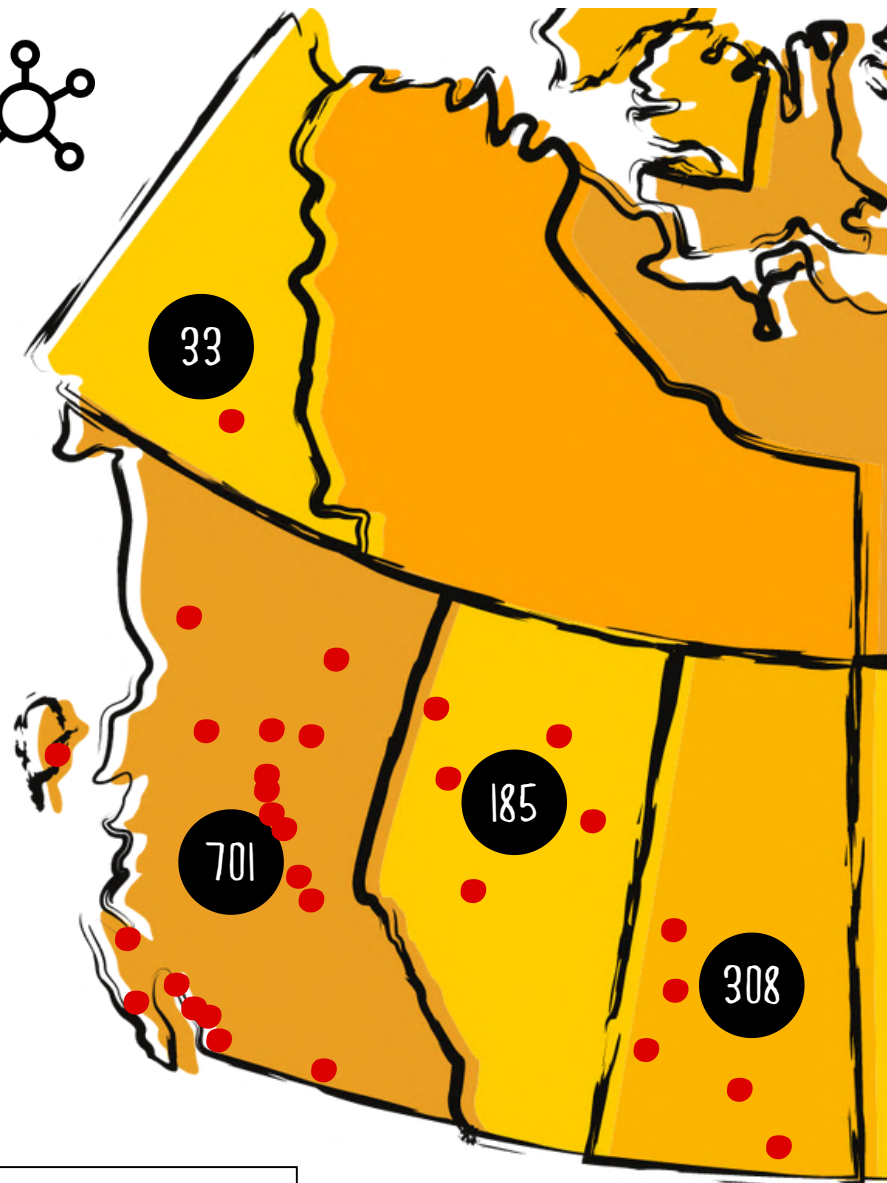
COMMUNITY MENTORS WERE HIRED & TRAINED

93 CMs & 31 Jr CMs/child and youth worker/teacher

75

COMMUNITIES & URBAN ORGANIZATIONS

partnered with Right To Play



Yukon (1)

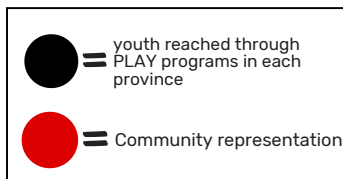
Champagne and Aishihik First Nations



British Columbia (19)

Beecher Bay (Sc'ianew) First Nation
 Esk'etemc First Nation
 Gitanyow Human Services
 Hiit'aGan.iina Kuuyas Naay (Skidegate)
 Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society
 Kitselas First Nation
 Nanoose First Nation, Snaw-Naw-As Health Centre
 Nusdeh Yoh Aboriginal Choice School
 Osoyoos Indian Band

Saik'uz First Nation
 Saulteau First Nation
 Skeetchestn Indian Band
 Squamish Nation (Valley)
 Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation (Dog Creek/Canoe Creek)
 Surrey School District #36
 Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc
 Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation (Tofino)
 Whe-La-La-U Area Council (Alert Bay)
 Williams Lake Indian Band



Alberta (5)

Alexander First Nation
 Driftpile Cree Nation
 Fishing Lake Métis Settlement
 Sagitawa Friendship Society
 Janvier Sekweha Youth Centre



SASKATCHEWAN (3)

Big Island Lake Cree Nation
 Cowessess First Nation
 White Buffalo Youth Lodge



MANITOBA (4)

- Brandon Friendship Centre
- Dauphin Friendship Centre
- Duck Bay Métis Settlement
- St Theresa Point First Nation



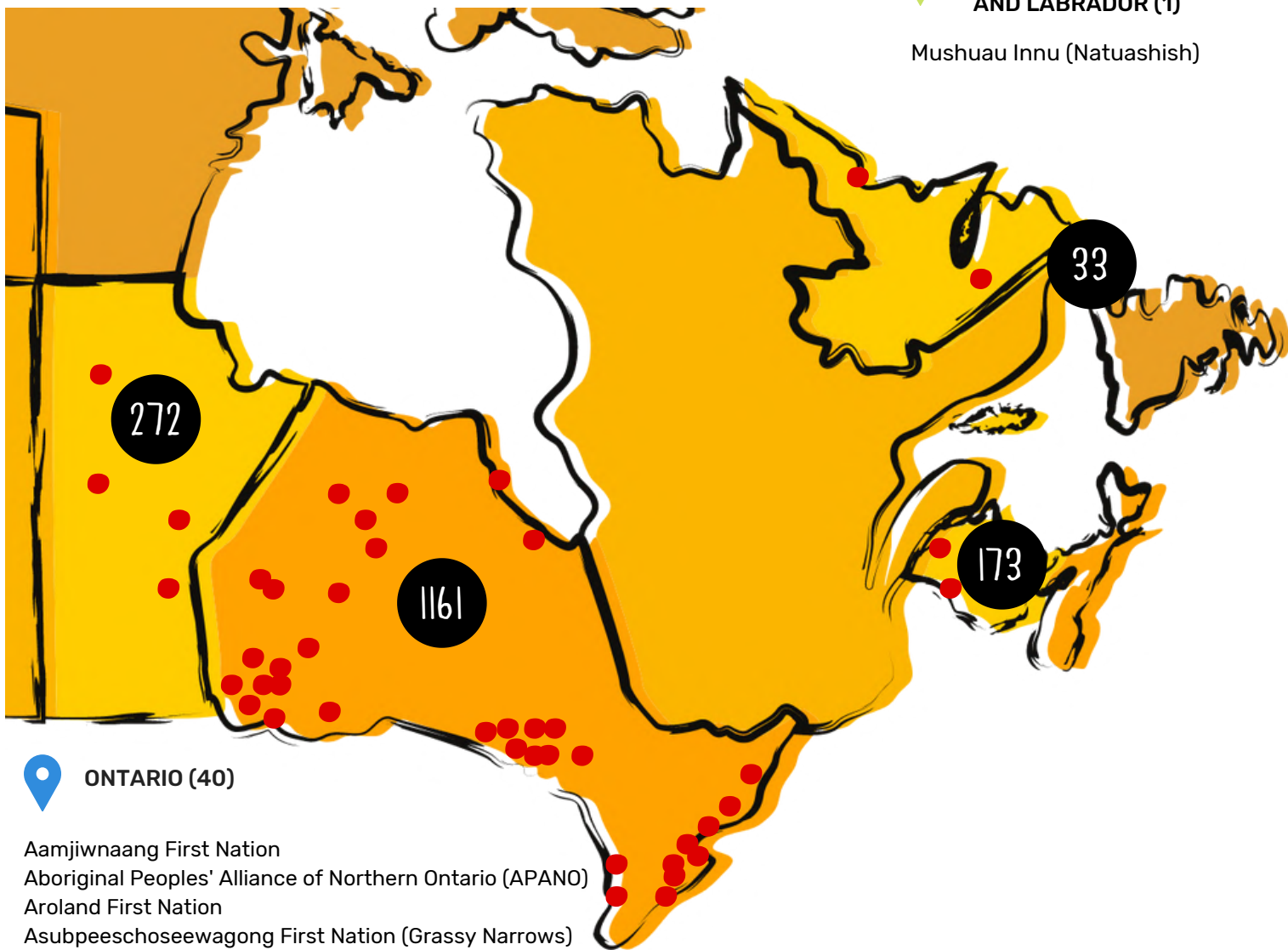
NEW BRUNSWICK (2)

- Kingsclear First Nation
- Tobique Youth Center



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR (1)

- Mushuau Innu (Natuashish)



ONTARIO (40)

- Aamjiwnaang First Nation
- Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance of Northern Ontario (APANO)
- Aroland First Nation
- Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation (Grassy Narrows)
- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (Whitefish Lake)
- Attawapiskat First Nation
- Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation
- Batchewana First Nation
- Beausoleil First Nation
- Cat Lake First Nation
- Eabametoong (Fort Hope)
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
- Inuuqatigiit (Ottawa Inuit Indian Centre)
- Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuug First Nation
- Matawa Learning Centre
- Naotkamegwaning First Nation (Whitefish Bay)
- Nibinamik First Nation
- Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation
- Niisaachewan First Nation (Dalles)

- Northwest Angle #33 First Nation
- Obashkaandagaang Bay First Nation (Washagamis Bay)
- Ojibways Onigaming First Nation
- Pic Mobert First Nation
- Pikangikum First Nation
- Poplar Hill First Nation
- Sheguiandah First Nation
- Sheshegwaning First Nation
- Shoal Lake #40 First Nation
- Six Nations of the Grand River

- Strecker Property
- Toronto Concrete Warriors
- Waabshki Penasi School (Wabigoon)
- Wabaseemoong (Whitedog)
- Wabauskang First Nation
- Wahnapiatae First Nation
- Walpole Island First nation
- Wasauksing First Nation
- Wauzhushk Onigum (Rat Portage)
- Webequie First Nation
- Whitefish River First Nation

HOW THE PLAY PROGRAM WORKS



So that young leaders can...



Build KNOWLEDGE about:

- Mental health & well-being
- Physical health & nutrition
- Leadership
- Culture & identity
- Community support networks



Build SKILLS such as:

- Communication & self-expression
- Teamwork & cooperation
- Empathy
- Decision-making & problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Coping & self-management
- Goal setting



Make CONNECTIONS with:

- Peers
- Elders
- Their Community Mentor
- Service providers
- Other community members

Children & youth feel empowered to share their voices & develop:



A HEALTHY & ACTIVE LIFESTYLE



HEALTHY & SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS



A MOTIVATION FOR LIFE-LONG LEARNING



LEADERSHIP & LIFE SKILLS

Read on to find out about the impactful programming we implemented in 2021-2022



COVID-19 RESPONSE

COVID-19 continued to pose challenges during the 2021-2022 program year, however Community Mentors (CMs) and youth participants alike rose to overcome these challenges. Right To Play strives to support CMs in creating positive, meaningful opportunities for children and youth to continue to safely play while learning to minimize feelings of isolation and sustaining positive connections. By meeting each community where they are at in relation to local COVID-19 protocols, we have been able to support at-home and safe in-person programming. Below is a snapshot of our response:



Right To Play:

- Continued with remote coaching and restarted in-person community visits in May 2022
- Developed and facilitated virtual trainings, including a session on *Programming During a Pandemic* in October 2021. Participants explored strategies for engaging youth, transitioning to modified programming, Right To Play resources, and creative approaches Community Mentors have used in programs



Community Partners & Mentors:

- Created and shared skill-building videos on healthy cooking, volleyball and soccer drills, and dynamic and static stretching
- Facilitated positive mental health activities like positive affirmations, vision boarding, and hip hop
- White Buffalo Youth Lodge in Saskatchewan hosted a remote Intergenerational Event over the holidays, with families receiving themed activities, crafts, and food



ALBERTA COMMUNITIES TEACH GENDER EQUITY THROUGH BALL HOCKEY PROGRAM

In July, Right To Play staff, Community Mentors (CMs), and youth from Alexander First Nation, Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, and Sagitawa Friendship Society came together at Wabamun Lake near Edmonton to kick off summer programming. They spent the week camping, playing hockey with Oilers alumnus Ladislav Smid, and engaging in land-based activities as a part of an initiative to promote gender equity in sport for youth in Indigenous communities.

To help CMs prepare to launch summer programming, Right To Play hosted a training for Alberta Community partners in April 2022 at Rogers Place, the Edmonton Oilers' home arena. CMs from Driftpile Cree Nation and Janvier Sekweha Youth Centre were also in attendance. There, Right To Play staff and Oilers alumni Kevin Lowe and Ian Herbers worked with CMs to develop tailored ball hockey programs, focusing on gender equity, barriers to participation that girls face, and how boys can be allies - all while staying active and healthy.

The program, a partnership between Right To Play, Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation, and Oilers Hockey Engagement Department, helped strengthened young peoples' sense of identity, according to CMs. After participating, CMs reported that both boys and girls have more confidence and enjoy the sport more. They are also more aware of each other's personal space and know not to assume the gender of their peers, the CMs explain of the program's impact.

Providing a safe space for youth to explore gender equity together was key to success. Diamond, a CM from Alexander First Nation, hopes to continue working to remove barriers so more girls in her community can participate in sport, sharing that the summer program gave youth from Alexander "a story to tell, an experience to continue to share."

Thank you to the Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation for their commitment to supporting gender equity and play-based learning.





The PLAY program looks a little different in every community or organization depending on the context, needs and interests of youth. But the data and feedback we collect about the program shows they all have at least one thing in common: a positive impact on participants.

Throughout the **75 communities** that ran the PLAY program across the country this year, youth have been supported on their journey in...



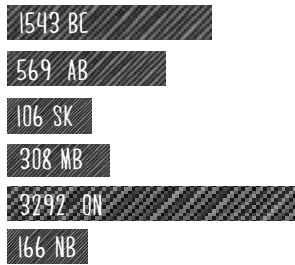
BUILDING NEW CONNECTIONS

259

Intergenerational Events (IGEs) were planned and led by Community Mentors

5,984

community members participated in IGEs



“Participating in [a youth event] allowed me to learn how to be a leader to the younger children and showed me what responsibility and accountability means when participating in groups.”
 -Program Participant, Osoyoos Indian Band

89%

of children and youth that participated in the PLAY program have adequate knowledge of healthy food options and know the benefits of a healthy diet

39% increase from beginning of program

92%

of children and youth in the PLAY program adopt positive coping skills when angry or stressed

13% increase from beginning of program





GROWING AS LEADERS & ROLE MODELS



5 Training events throughout the program year



124 Attendees in training sessions

96% of Community Mentors reported having an improved capacity to deliver play-based programs to children and youth

Out of the youth that were surveyed at both the beginning and end of program...



66%

of youth participating in the PLAY program feel confident about themselves and show improved confidence



59%

of youth report having the ability to be leaders after participating in the PLAY program

“ I feel more comfortable planning [a youth event] in the future. I will definitely be more likely to participate in similar events in the future and will be able to take a leadership role. ”

- Program Participant, Williams Lake First Nation



IMPROVING HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Right To Play partner communities and organizations work towards improved health and/or improved healthy relationships in children and youth. This year,

49 Communities/organizations worked towards improved health

26 Communities/organizations worked towards improved healthy relationships

80% of children and youth who participated in the PLAY program have seen improvements in their health and well-being since joining the program

87% of children and youth who participated in the PLAY program know the importance of maintaining healthy relationships

89% of children and youth who participated in the PLAY program enjoy their family's cultural and familial traditions.

87% of children and youth who participated in the PLAY program practice healthy relationships by helping other youth, playing with others and collaborating



YOUTH WORKERS LEARN NEW SKILLS THROUGH SPORT EXCHANGE IN ALASKA

Three youth workers (Community Mentors) from Right To Play partner communities and organizations, and one Right To Play staff, gained new skills and knowledge to apply to their programs after participating in a week-long exchange in Alaska in July 2022.

Advancing the Playing Field: Empowering the Most Marginalized Youth through Sport in Canada and the USA was facilitated by Women Win and the International Sports Programming Initiative. Participants visited youth programs to observe sport and social change in action, engaged in leadership building activities, and explored Alaska and its cultural history.

Pat, a CM from Kingsclear First Nation in New Brunswick, is now incorporating culture and new sport initiatives into his program. “I learned that the tribes [in Alaska] cherish their culture and went to the extreme to promote it. With that, I can come back and promote our culture to the youth and do medicine walks and teach the traditional ways of harvesting animals,” Pat explains. Pat is also starting an all-female wrestling program with 3 female-identifying coaches and new equipment after meeting Tela O’Donnell, an American Olympic wrestler, and learning about her Wrestle Like a Girl program.



For Sebastian, a CM from Hamilton Regional Indian Centre in Ontario, the exchange was “a personal and professionally captivating experience.” He learned about local traditional medicine, survival skills, water purification, and how to run an outdoor program. Sebastian now plays Alaskan Native Games that he learned with youth in his program and shared with other Community Mentors at a Right To Play training.

Like Pat and Sebastian, Tori, a CM from Beausoleil First Nation in Ontario, “learned how to meaningfully connect Indigenous youth to a variety of sports that I never would have thought of sharing.” The exchange fostered many opportunities, especially a network of people across the United States and Canada that serve marginalized young people. “It was nice to know there are other coaches and youth care workers out there who are championing the work we all do for our communities,” Tori reflects.

The opportunity to engage with other youth programs, Indigenous cultures, and individuals working with youth has had a lasting impact on Community Mentors that will also impact the youth they work with in their communities. Sebastian shares that before the exchange he didn’t have much experience traveling outside of his home community and was nervous to travel by plane. “However, once I stepped out of my comfort zone, I realized that it was a great experience that I would never have had if I did not try something new” Sebastian reflects. “I would like to encourage youth to always step out of their comfort zone to try something new. It may be a life changing experience.”



CONNECTING TO LAND AND CULTURE IMPROVES HOLISTIC HEALTH FOR YOUTH AND YOUTH WORKERS

Through the leadership of local youth workers (Community Mentors) Alyssa and Shawna in Walpole Island First Nation and Shayne, Terry and Jakson in Kenora Chiefs Advisory, 15 youth across Ontario have had access to new opportunities to connect to the land and their culture as part of the Traditional and Land-based Quality Sport program. The program is a Right To Play pilot program supported by Sport Canada.

Community Mentors experienced positive impacts on their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health through planning and leading land-based and cultural activities from August 2021 to March 2022, and youth participants reported an increase in their health and well-being. "I didn't grow up with a lot of knowledge of culture and traditions, I'm just learning more myself in the last couple of years. My family are residential school survivors, and not raised with their culture. This work is helping me heal," Alyssa reflects.

In Walpole Island First Nation in Lake St. Clair in southwestern Ontario, Shawna and Alyssa organized a fall duck hunt, hide tanning, ribbon skirt workshops and youth attendance at community ceremonies, which has led to change in the youth. "The energy the youth give off is filling their spirits. It's a very bonding experience. They have created a little family. Other youth who aren't in the program want to join because the regulars are so welcoming." After going to ceremony for a few years, Shawna has now been able to share the experience with youth and see their involvement in ceremony grow. "It has been amazing," she says.



LAND-BASED LEARNING CONT'D...

In western Ontario on land with bush, a lake and beach, marsh, open fields and hills, Jakson and other Community Mentors led a family and youth camp for nearby KCA communities. The camp included a fall harvest, language learning, horseback riding, obstacle courses, fire building and cooking, snow shoeing and a celebration feast. "I can really see the impact of horseback riding on youths who are non-binary," Jakson says. "I have observed that it has helped them to be happier and it has provided them an avenue to release stress."

Through the activities at the KCA program, youth have learned about the Seven Grandfather Teachings, responsibility and relationships with animals, hunting skills, axe and fire safety, wood identification, harvesting materials, giving thanks to the land, sharing roles, leave no trace principles and more. "It has been great being outside, exercising and interacting with youth. I became more health conscious and used every opportunity to talk to youth about nutrition and the benefits of exercising" Jakson explains.



Alyssa, Shawna, Shayne, Terry and Jakson's leadership with the Traditional and Land-based Quality Sport program has contributed to positive impacts on their communities and beyond. Their experience will help inform Right To Play's strategic priority to improve psychosocial well-being among Indigenous youth through increased access to land-based programming.

Reflecting on her previous work in schools, Alyssa expresses the importance of youth access to cultural and land-based activities in their communities. "Kids need something that's not so institutionalized. Staff at schools are mostly non-Indigenous and can't relate to the trauma our kids have experienced." In her own personal experience, Alyssa says "connecting to that cultural piece has helped me find confidence and voice and advocate for myself."





2021 marked the beginning of Right To Play's Indigenous Program's five year Strategic Plan. The plan is based on partner feedback, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, feedback from external evaluations and Right To Play's Reconciliation Action Plan.

We have been working in partnership with youth, communities, educators, and other stakeholders to improve the PLAY program, co-develop a Land-Based Program, build on Youth Leadership, establish and prioritize Quality Education, and make a plan to respond to partners experiencing crisis, so we can continue to create safe and engaging opportunities for youth to thrive.

Here is some of what we have achieved in the last year:

PLAY Program

Vision: Improve the health and well-being of Indigenous children and youth participating in Right To Play programs.

- Right To Play updated new Program Manual to help CMs build health & well-being programming for children and youth

Quality Education

Vision: Improve teacher-student engagement through culturally responsive play-based programming.

- Right To Play Conducted a virtual workshop on Trauma-Informed Classrooms with the Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario members
- Two Right To Play staff attended and presented at the National Indigenous Education & Reconciliation Network Gathering in Ottawa, Ontario in May 2022

Land-Based Program

Vision: Improve mental health and psychosocial well-being among Indigenous youth, through barrier-free and culturally grounded land-based experiences.

- Right To Play completed the Traditional & Land-Based Quality Sport pilot project with the support of Sport Canada:
 - 15 youth and five Community Mentors from Walpole Island First Nation and Kenora Chiefs Advisory participated
 - 83% of children reported a good health rating at the end of the project, up from 70% of children at the start of the project
 - A summary of the health and wellness measure of all children showed an increase of 1.5% at endline
- 50% of partnership applicants for the 2022-2023 program year expressed interest in collaborating with Right To Play on the Land-Based Program.
- 27 Right To Play staff engaged in land-based learning at the annual retreat in August 2022
- Established partnership with the University of Ottawa and Dr. Tricia McGuire Adams to guide program development, monitoring and evaluation

Youth Leadership

Vision: Strengthen the capacity of Indigenous youth to advocate for their own well-being.

- Youth in 17 partner communities and organizations designed and led Local Youth Initiatives in June 2022
- The first Indigenous Programs Youth Advisory council is in development and expected to launch in 2023

Responding to Crisis

Vision: Establish appropriate processes where Right To Play can provide support during a time of crisis at the request of community partners.

- Right To Play with Indigenous Affairs Ontario supported two Indigenous communities evacuated to Toronto due to flooding by organizing games and activities for children and youth in May 2022
- Working with Indigenous Mental Health consultant to review existing resources and establish trauma-informed practices and protocols for communities in crisis



FUNDING PARTNERS

AltaGas
BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
Beutel, Goodman & Company Ltd.
Canada Life
Chamandy Foundation
CIBC
Cooperators Group
Dentons Canada
Department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations, Government of Manitoba
Eric Tripp & Maria Smith
Future Skills Centre
Indigenous Services Canada
Ivari
John Friedrichsen & Tracy Cooper
KPMG Foundation
LEGO Canada
LEGO Replay
Locke & King
Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations
Mastermind Toys
M.E.H, Foundation
National Bank of Canada
Nuclear Waste Management Organization
Olympic Committee Canada
Omers
Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
Ontario Ministry of Indigenous Affairs
Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

CTMS
The Chang School of Continuing Education, Toronto
Metropolitan University
Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
My Turtleneck Design
Painted Turtle Arts Camp
The Psychology Foundation of Canada
School of Child and Youth Care, Toronto Metropolitan University
University of Ottawa, Faculty of Human Kinetics
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NHL Canada

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Suncor Energy Foundation
Sun Life Financial
The Connor-Uffelmann Foundation
The Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation
The Government of Canada
The Jessiman Foundation
The Harold E. Ballard Foundation
The Lawrence and Judith Tanenbaum Family Foundation
The Winnipeg Foundation
TuGo
Wharatah Capital Advisors Ltd.
Wheaton Precious Metals

ELDERS & KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

Erika Iserhoff (Constance Lake First Nation, ON)
Gloria McGregor (Whitefish River First Nation, ON)
Isabel Arcand (Alexander First Nation, AB)
Kim Wheatley (Shawanaga First Nation, ON)
Lois Macdonald (Missanabie Cree First Nation, ON)
Mike Plain (Aamjiwnaang First Nation, ON)

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