

# PLAY

Promoting Life-skills in  
Aboriginal Youth

2017-18 YEAR IN REVIEW



RIGHT TO PLAY



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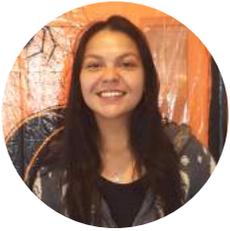
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## FROM A PLAY PARTICIPANT

I am 19 years young. I am a proud Annishnaabe Kwe! My soul is from Aazhoodena #43. I live in Sarnia, ON. When I look back, Right To Play will always be a part of my life. Right To Play is where I found who I was. It guided me to find inspiration to better myself and my community. It taught me how to be a team player, to be open-minded and to not be afraid of stepping outside my comfort zone. I learned to speak up about what I believe in at Right To Play.

In 2013, I was fortunate to attend the Right To Play Tribute Dinner gala to speak as a youth. Since then I have spoken publicly on numerous occasions. Now, I work at the Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship (SLNFC) Centre. I am a part of the Red-Cross Youth Council and SLNFC Youth & Elder Committee and am working on creating a youth council for my home community.

I look forward to returning to Lambton College soon, so I can finish my career goal of becoming a Social Service Worker. I take my leadership, responsibility and courage skills I learned at Right To Play and apply them in my everyday life. Right To Play has given me all the appropriate tools to succeed in life.

**ALABAMA  
BRESSETTE-CLOUD**  
FORMER PARTICIPANT,  
AAZHOODENA #43  
(KETTLE & STONEY POINT  
FIRST NATION), ON



## FROM RIGHT TO PLAY'S CEO

As Canadian institutions, government bodies and citizens progress towards fulfilling the 94 Calls to Action outlined in the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, we recognize the long and challenging road ahead. At Right To Play, we have seen great successes in our program this year, but there is still much to be done.

We are so proud to share this Year in Review which highlights and celebrates:

- **Youth:** The over 7,000 children and youth in PLAY programs - our highest ever youth reach - who share their interests, mentor their peers and grow as young leaders with each opportunity.
- **Community Mentors (CMs):** For their tireless energy in creating a safe and consistent space for youth, sharing healthy living practices through play and working towards a more community-driven and sustainable program.
- **Elders, family and community members:** Without whom the program would not be the important space for cultural learning and intergenerational connections that it is.
- **Band Councils and Executive Directors:** For their investment and trust in this unique program.
- **Donors and partners:** Who have enabled this program to continue to grow and have a positive impact on thousands of children and youth.

To everyone who supports Right To Play and who believes in the power of play, thank you. With your help, we will continue this vital work with Indigenous children and youth in Canada.



**KEVIN FREY**  
CEO, RIGHT TO PLAY  
INTERNATIONAL



# A Year of PLAY

# Looking back at events & milestones

Sep

## Fall Community Mentor Training in Ontario

brought together 29 newly-hired CMs from across the province to build networks of support & explore ways to design locally relevant programs guided by youth voice.

## Core programs launch

in partner communities, through After School, Youth Leadership or Play For Prevention program models.



Nov

## Sport For Development Clinics

kick off with Lacrosse in Skeetchestn First Nation & Fort Erie Indian Friendship Center, and Basketball in Attawapiskat First Nation, engaging 432 children and youth.

“ I noticed a difference in program participants after the clinic was held. There was more participation in regular programming, the youth were happy from the experience and were definitely positively impacted from being among positive role models. ”

- Jarvis Williams, Community Mentor, Gitanyow



Jan

## Hockey & Basketball clinics

were hosted in Fort Chipewyan, Duck Bay & Gitanyow, engaging 263 children and youth.

Oct

## Fall Community Mentor Training in British Columbia

brought together 30 newly hired & returning CMs from British Columbia, Alberta & Manitoba who explored ways to embed play-based learning into the design of youth programs.



Dec

## Painted Turtle After School Arts Camp kicks off

with training for 8 Youth Leaders from Duck Bay, Chippewas of the Thames, Six Nations & Wapekeka to lead an 8 week arts & play-based camp in their community from January-March, 2018.



Feb

## Winter Community Mentor Training in Ontario

brought together 49 CMs from across the province to refresh their skills and work toward new learning goals.

## Fort Severn Hockey Clinic

engages 77 children & youth from kindergarten to grade 8.

## PLAY Program receives endorsement

from the Union of BC Chiefs, the First Nations Summit and the BC Assembly of First Nations.

## Aboriginal Youth Opportunities Project comes to an end

with specialized professional development opportunities in First Aid/CPR, youth leadership and the Aboriginal Coaching Model for youth in Walpole Island, Chippewas of the Thames and Oneida Nation respectively.

91%

of CMs at Winter Training learned how to engage youth in games & activities that teach coping skills to deal with stress.

## Taking Care Coping Skills Resource

launches with activities that build & enhance strategies that youth use to manage challenges in their lives & support their well-being.

# for the PLAY Program in 2017-18

Mar

## Soccer & Ultimate Frisbee clinics

hosted in Sheguiandah and Six Nations respectively, engaged a total of 555 youth.

“I got really active...this clinic helped me get off the phone.”

- Youth Participant

May

## Youth Leadership Symposium in Ontario

brought together 81 youth from communities across Ontario for a week of leadership activities that promote living the good life.

## Summer Community Mentor Training in Gitsegukla, BC

brought together 5 CMs from partner communities in Northern BC.

Jul

## Summer programs launch

across PLAY partner communities.

82% of communities observed an increase in youth taking on leadership roles.

73% of communities have observed an increase in connection to local culture and history among children & youth.



Apr

## Right To Play attended the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

at the United Nations in New York. CM Elias George from Four Directions Student Centre in Kingston and Right To Play Staff participated in sessions about Indigenous peoples' collective rights to lands, territories and resources.

## Youth Leadership Symposium in British Columbia

brought together 49 youth from across BC, AB & MB for a week of leadership activities that focused on building strong peer and community connections.

“I really enjoyed doing the activities because it gave me a chance to build teamwork skills and learn how to plan for my community.”

- Youth Leadership Symposium Participant

Jun

## Summer Community Mentor Training in Vancouver, BC

brought together 12 CMs from partner communities in BC, AB and MB.

## Summer Community Mentor Training in Thunder Bay, ON

included a 2-day suicide first aid workshop for 7 CMs from across the province.

## Right To Play was honoured to participate in National Indigenous Peoples Day events

in Vancouver & Surrey. Staff led play-based activities for children, youth and their families that highlighted teamwork, communication & healthy coping skills.

Aug

## Remote Community Employability Project Wraps Up in Pikangikum First Nation, ON

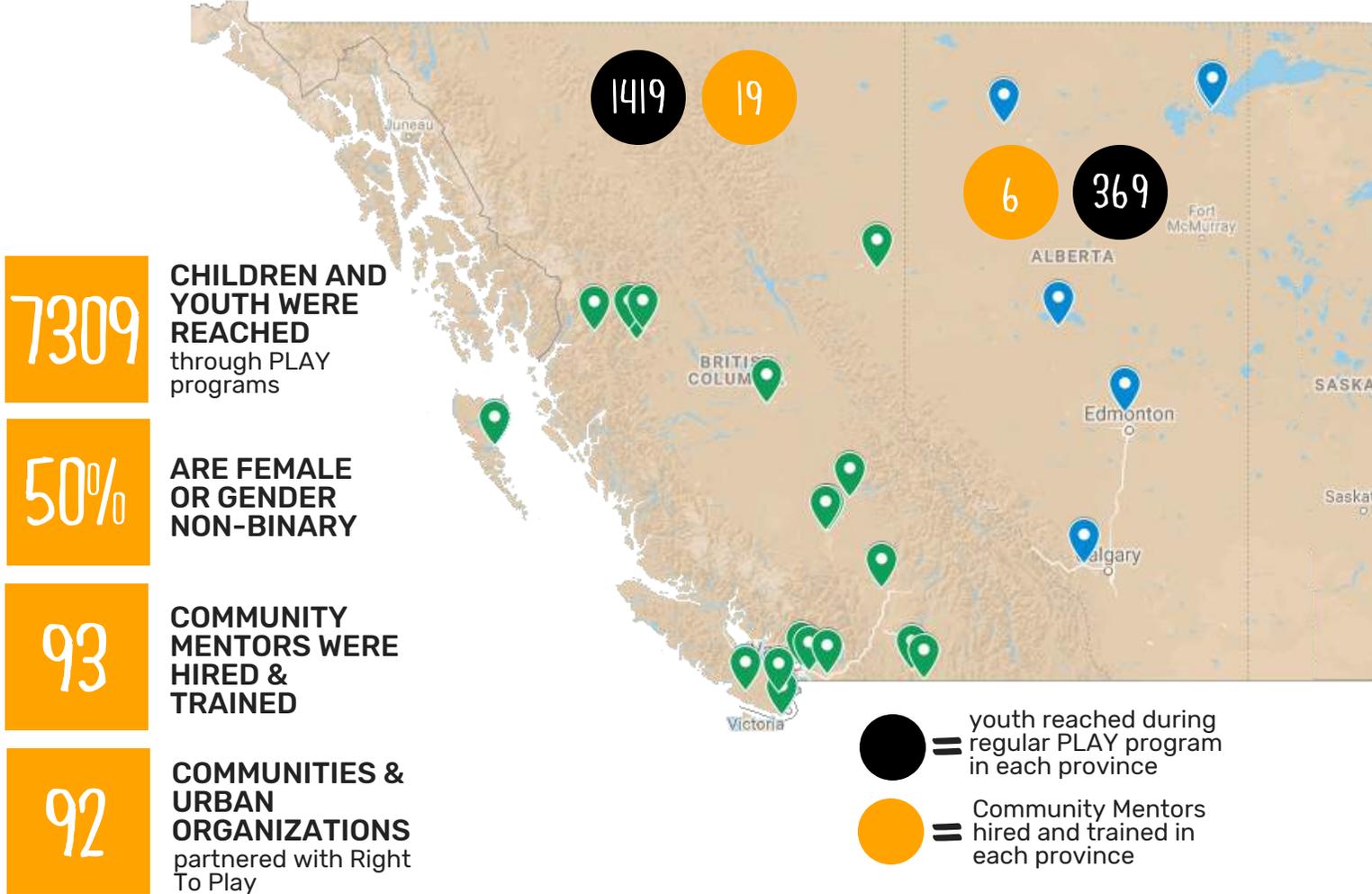
10 Emerging Leaders (ELs) were hired and supported by the CM this summer.

2 ELs were assigned to work with summer students on each of the 5 community projects, facilitated by implementing partner Project Journey:

- School boardwalk
- Community garden & pavilion
- Bicycle Park & trails
- Play-based youth programming
- Canoe route development



# PLAY'S REACH



## BRITISH COLUMBIA

- Beecher Bay First Nation
- Board of Education of School District #36, Surrey
- Ditidaht Community Services
- Esk'etemc First Nation
- Gitanmaax Band
- Gitanyow Human Services
- Gitlaxt'aamiks Village Government
- Gitsegukla Health Board
- Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society, Duncan
- Lower Similkameen Indian Band
- Mission Friendship Centre
- North East Native Advancing Society, Fort St. John
- Osoyoos Indian Band
- Saik'uz First Nation
- Skeetchestn Indian Band
- Skidegate Youth Centre
- Stswecem'c Xgat'tem First Nation
- Urban Native Youth Association, Vancouver
- Williams Lake Indian Band

## ALBERTA

- Alexander First Nation
- Chiniki First Nation
- Dene Tha' (Meander River) First Nation
- Driftpile First Nation
- Fort Chipewyan Athabasca Delta Community School
- Mikisew Cree First Nation





**ONTARIO**

- Aamjiwnaang First Nation
- Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance Northern Ontario, Moosonee
- Animakee Wa Zhing 37, Regina Bay
- Animakee Wa Zhing 37, Windigo Island
- Aroland First Nation
- Asubpeeschoseewagong Netum Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows)
- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek (Whitefish Lake First Nation)
- Attawapiskat First Nation
- Batchewana First Nation
- Beausoleil First Nation
- Biigtigong Nishnaabeg (Pic River)
- Big Grassy River First Nation
- Cat Lake First Nation
- Chippewas of Nawash
- Chippewas of the Thames First Nation
- Eabametoong First Nation (Fort Hope)
- Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre
- Fort Severn First Nation
- Fort William First Nation
- Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre, Kingston
- Garden River First Nation
- Ginoogaming First Nation
- Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
- Henvey Inlet First Nation
- Kettle and Stoney Point First Nation
- Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation
- Matawa Learning Centre, Thunder Bay
- Naoakamegwanning (Whitefish Bay)
- Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation

**MANITOBA**

- Duck Bay
- Ginew Wellness Centre, Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation
- St. Theresa Point First Nation School
- Tataskweyah Cree Nation (Split Lake)

- Nishnawbe Gamik Friendship Centre, Sioux Lookout
- North Caribou Lake First Nation
- Northern Nishnawbe Education Council, Thunder Bay
- Northwest Angle #33
- Obashkaandagaang (Washagamis Bay)
- Ochiichagwe'babigo'ining (Dalles)
- Ojibways of Onigaming
- Oneida Nation of the Thames
- Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre
- Pikangikum First Nation
- Poplar Hill First Nation
- Sandy Lake First Nation
- Saugeen First Nation #29
- Sheguiandah First Nation
- Sheshegwaning First Nation
- Shoal Lake #40
- Six Nations of the Grand River

- Taykwa Tagamou First Nation
- Temiskaming Native Women's Support Group
- Toronto Concrete Warriors
- Waabshki Penasi School, Wabigoon Lake First Nation
- Wabaseemoong (Whitedog)
- Wabauskang First Nation
- Wahgoshig First Nation
- Wahnapiatae First Nation
- Walpole Island First Nation
- Wapekeka First Nation
- Wasauksing First Nation
- Wauzhushk Onigum (Rat Portage)
- Webequie First Nation
- Weenusk First Nation
- Whitefish River First Nation
- Wikwemikong Unceded Territory
- Wunnumin Lake First Nation

# BY HARNESSING THE POWER OF PLAY...



Right To Play staff train & coach Community Mentors



Community Mentors deliver safe and inclusive youth programs & events

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
- and other community members

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



HEALTHY & SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS



A MOTIVATION FOR LIFE-LONG LEARNING



A HEALTHY & ACTIVE LIFESTYLE



A READINESS FOR EMPLOYMENT

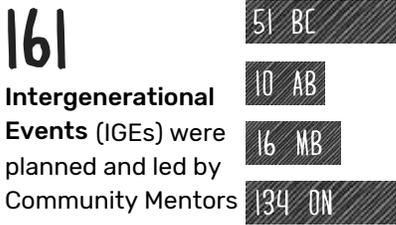
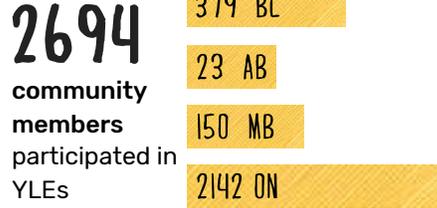
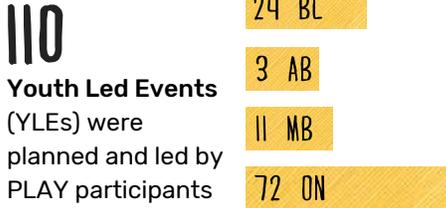
# PLAY'S IMPACT

Read about some of the achievements of Community Mentors, youth and the PLAY program this year.

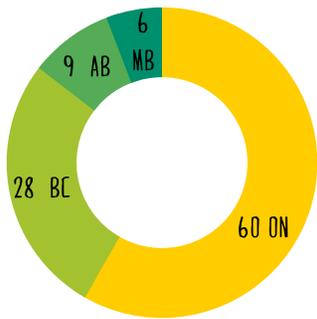
## PLAY IN ACTION



## COMMUNITY EVENTS & REACH

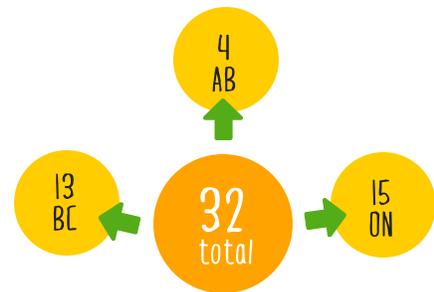
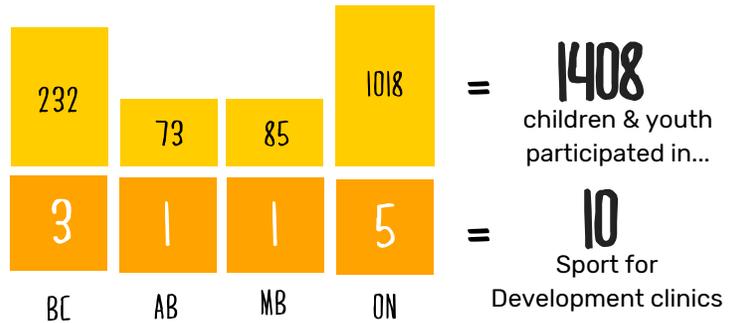


## CAPACITY BUILDING



**103**  
youth were hired by communities to support their local CM to deliver PLAY programs this summer

## SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT



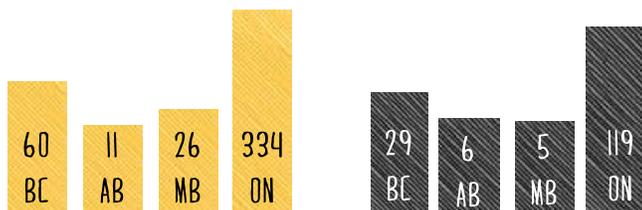
coaches were trained in delivering sports programming, including Community Mentors, community members and youth

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

**1089** parents, family members, Elders, partners and other community members were engaged in regular PLAY programming

**431** PARENTS & FAMILY MEMBERS

**159** ELDERS





### HEALTHY LIVING

SINCE STARTING THE RIGHT TO PLAY PROGRAM...

**81%** of children and youth try to eat more healthy snacks/meals outside the Right To Play program

**74%** of youth learned ways to cope with difficult situations and feelings

### HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

**84%** of children and youth feel included in the group

**80%** of CMs agree that youth have more opportunities to build relationships with community members

AT THE RIGHT TO PLAY PROGRAM, I LEARNED...

"HOW TO GROW AND STRENGTHEN MY MEDICINE WHEEL."

"THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPE 1 AND TYPE 2 DIABETES."

THE BIGGEST CHANGE I'VE SEEN IN MYSELF IS THAT...

"I TRY TO BE NICE TO EVERYONE, NOT JUST MY GOOD FRIENDS."

"I BECAME MORE INCLUDED IN MY COMMUNITY."

### EDUCATION

SINCE STARTING THE RIGHT TO PLAY PROGRAM...

**80%** of youth try to include all members of their group when making group decisions

**88%** of CMs agree that youth have more enthusiasm for activities that promote their wellbeing

### LEADERSHIP & LIFE-SKILLS

**79%** of youth learned what skills are needed to be a positive leader

**74%** of youth are more confident sharing their ideas in a group

THE BIGGEST CHANGE I'VE SEEN IN MYSELF IS THAT...

"I'M EXCITED FOR SCHOOL."

AT THE RIGHT TO PLAY PROGRAM, I LEARNED...

"HOW TO PAY MORE ATTENTION IN SCHOOL."

THE BIGGEST CHANGE I'VE SEEN IN MYSELF IS THAT...

"I CAN GIVE MYSELF GOALS AND ACTUALLY ACHIEVE THEM."

"I'M BECOMING A BIGGER LEADER THAN I AM ALREADY."



This year, Right To Play's Promoting Life skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program partnered with 92 Indigenous communities and urban organizations across 4 provinces. 93 locally-hired Community Mentors were trained to deliver weekly play-based activities that promote healthy living, healthy relationships, education and employability skills, developing programs that are responsive to the individual needs of their community.

At the heart of the PLAY program are the partnerships developed between local communities and Right To Play, enabling us to work together to promote healthy life-skills in children and youth. Last year, our team developed a strategic plan to guide our operations – and as a result, our programming – over the next 3 years. This year, we are reporting on our progress. As we look ahead to 2020, we will continue to work in partnership with communities to create safe and engaging opportunities for youth to thrive, by improving our approaches in:



## YOUTH VOICE



## TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE



## COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY

Read on to find out more about what this meant for our programs this year!

The group that best understands their strengths and needs are the youth themselves! Young people, while impacted, are often excluded from decision-making opportunities. That is why one of the PLAY program's guiding principles is to ensure youth have their voices heard in our programs. Offering meaningful opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles is crucial to enable them to experience personal agency and growth in their lives.

**VISION:**

*We will enhance opportunities for youth to drive program decisions, assess program outcomes and take on enhanced leadership roles.*



*How we're living our vision...*

A SAFE AND FUN SPACE FOR YOUTH TO THRIVE 

In Beecher Bay, a Vancouver Island community of 150 members, the PLAY program has had a great impact on 17-year-old Danny Charles. Danny started as a youth participant 2 years ago, and has grown a lot since then.

"I'm transgender, female to male. I grew up in a really small community. My grandparents raised me, mostly," Danny recounts. In 2017, Emily Percival-Paterson, a youth worker, asked Danny to become a junior youth worker and support the PLAY program. "This was really stepping out of my comfort zone because I had a lot of anxiety and depression," Danny explains. "But working with kids really changed it, a lot."

Danny's growth had a lot to do with Emily challenging him to push himself. "We had a community day," Danny explains. "And that was so much fun. We did invasive plant removal – the broombush. I thought it was going to suck." But as Emily encouraged the youth to let out their emotions through the process, Danny realized how cathartic it was. He explains how experiences such as this have helped him to grow as a person.



*Danny Charles, a long-time PLAY participant, has stepped outside of his comfort zone at the program.*

Another powerful experience for Danny was Right To Play's Youth Leadership Symposium, which took place in Gibsons, BC in June 2018. At the start, he was nervous about the week. "I wasn't a people person," Danny explains. But a week of connecting with other youth through play really turned it around for him. "We have a big friend group that we made at the Youth Symposium, from different communities."

Now, Danny is looking ahead to becoming a Community Mentor for the youth in Beecher Bay next year. "This is going to be so different, because I'm a CM and not a youth. [...] I feel amazed that I'm here," Danny shares. Still a youth himself, he wants to create a program that participants are excited about. "So if their parents say, 'Hey you can stay home today!' they'll say, 'no I want to go to group!'" he laughs. "I want to make them feel safe. [...] I want to make them feel loved. I want them to have fun."

## SHARING THE LOVE OF BASKETBALL

15-year-old Josh Chartrand has participated in the Duck Bay PLAY Program ever since the Manitoba community partnered with Right To Play 3 years ago. He's demonstrated his leadership skills through the program, consistently getting involved and supporting his peers. But this summer, Josh took it to a whole new level!

Inspired by the youth he met at Right To Play's Youth Leadership Symposium this spring, Josh returned to Duck Bay with hopes of organizing his own youth-led initiative. With his passion for basketball, he decided to plan an end-of-summer, 3-on-3 basketball tournament.

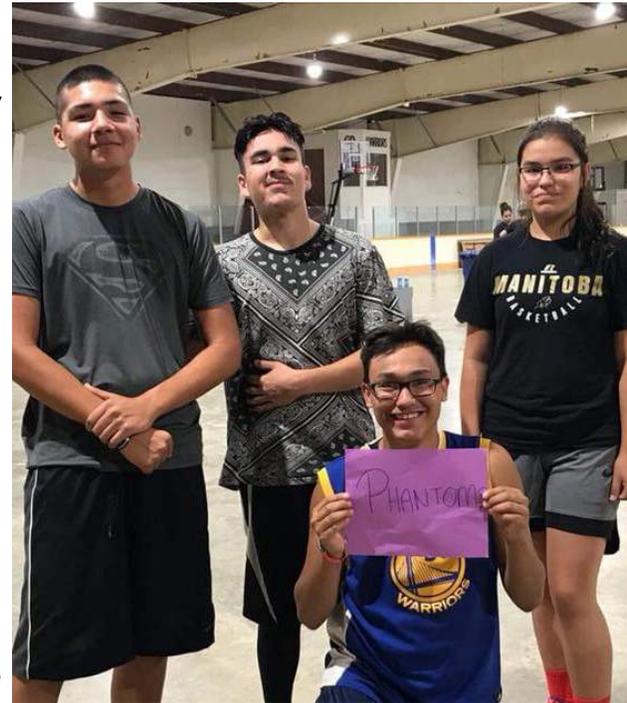
Supported by the local Community Mentor Lisa Genaille and Community Supervisor Cynthia Genaille, Josh's goals for the event were to increase connections across communities in the area and share his love of basketball. "[Josh] just loves the sport so much, [...] he wants to teach more kids who don't have the abilities and skills yet," Lisa explains.

Josh partnered with some youth from neighbouring communities Pine Creek and Camperville to plan and deliver the event, which they called the United Indigenous Basketball Tournament. The event took place at the Pine Creek arena. "[Josh] was really good and organized," Lisa says with pride. "He's a role model for the younger kids."

Thanks to the commitment from Josh, his peers, Lisa, Cynthia, and all 3 communities, the tournament wound up attracting almost 50 participants from 7 communities, and 30 spectators! "It was a good turnout," said Lisa. "We had 8 teams competing and also had a silent auction fundraiser."

The 3 communities worked hard to acquire sponsorships from a number of organizations, and each community contributed something different to the event, including medals, trophies, t-shirts and healthy snacks. Josh was also proud that the team he organized that day took second place in the tournament!

Cynthia had nothing but glowing reviews of the multi-community Youth-led Event. "Josh did great and was there 9 am sharp," she recounts. "Very inspiring to see our local kids compete at a sport that they love. I think it can only get bigger and better for next year." An undeniable success, Josh has said he would host a tournament like this every week if he could!



*A group of youth at the United Indigenous Basketball Tournament pose for a team photo.*



Being a trauma-informed organization means having a strengths-based approach that is grounded in understanding trauma and its widespread effects for youth and communities. This acts as a framework to inform and guide knowledge, practices and policies. Whether it is providing the support youth need during an unexpected crisis, or creating opportunities for generations to connect, Right To Play strives to be trauma-informed in all that we do.

### VISION:

*We will improve organizational skills, knowledge and expertise in the area of trauma-informed approaches to child and youth well-being to better support PLAY communities and participants.*



Youth and adults engage through drumming at the PLAY program in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek First Nation, ON.

### How we're living our vision...

## HEALTHY LIVING AND BUILDING PRIDE IN CULTURE

In Duncan, British Columbia, Community Mentor Xituluq Hwitsum has been running the Play For Prevention (PFP) program for the past two and a half years through the Hiiye'yu Lelum (House of Friendship) Society. His program is geared towards children ages 6-12, and its primary aim is to explore healthy living and diabetes through play.

Many of the children join the program knowing very little about diabetes, even though it is a prevalent condition within the community. Xituluq explores healthy living with the youth in a number of ways. He screens short YouTube videos to deepen the participants' understanding of diabetes, and incorporates health facts and quiz questions into popular games such as tag and dodgeball.

As a part of his holistic approach to health, Xituluq also brings in Elders and other community partners to facilitate cultural teachings and storytelling. "There is one Elder that we really like. [...] His name is Joey; he has a social work degree," he explains. "So he's able to – in ways only an Elder can – share stories with the kids about his past, even if it's not directly related to diabetes."

This summer, with the help of local Elders, knowledge keepers and program staff, Xituluq was also able to run Hul'q'umi'num language programming nearly every day. "It's kind of hard to get somebody in here consistently. It's usually people that are fluent in our language or know enough about it [who] are really involved culturally so they're really busy a lot," he explains. "A couple times, too, the summer camp workers just filled in with what they had learned previously. It was a bit of a group effort to keep it going."



Xituluq (right) with some youth at Right To Play's Youth Leadership Symposium in June.

But Xituluq knows it is worth the effort. "Every year we just have less and less fluent speakers," he says of Hul'q'umi'num. "Language really needs revitalization and part of that is instilling some pride with it, being able to honour it." He has witnessed how learning the language can build pride and confidence in youth, and has created a positive space for this to happen. "There would always be some kids that were shy, but who had been exposed to language. So we would do really basic words and they'd just be really stoked to know them," he says.

Looking ahead to the upcoming year, Xituluq is excited to work with Calvin Swustus, a fellow youth worker who brings a great deal of cultural knowledge to the program. With Calvin's support, Xituluq plans to add singing and drumming to the program's weekly activities, continuing the youth's exploration of culture and health through play.

## CONSISTENCY DURING A CRISIS

Angèle Dubois has offered a safe, reliable and consistent program for the youth of Henvey Inlet First Nation ever since she stepped into the Community Mentor role three years ago. This summer, when a forest fire encroaching on their community forced residents to evacuate, she realized just how important that consistency was. Angèle describes the day the community evacuated as surreal. "I was concerned, [...] but also not sure how concerned or worried I should be. We couldn't see the flames but the smoke was really heavy."

While the majority of children from her PLAY program were relocated to Sudbury, Angèle was initially sent to Parry Sound. But when a community member called upon Angèle for help, she jumped right into action, exploring activities in Sudbury for the kids to engage in. "We should have some sort of consistency even though this is a weird chaotic time," Angèle explains.

Angèle found two opportunities for youth that they would not otherwise have back at home. "We went to the pool at Laurentian. [...] They offer a day camp there so we did that for a week, and then we went to [...] a climbing gym".

For two weeks, Angèle shopped for and packed lunches daily for the campers, shuttled them to and from programming – and most importantly, she created a sense of safety and consistency by being a familiar face during an uncertain time. She was there if and when the youth needed someone to talk to.

"It was a new experience. [The kids] were excited about the things they got to do. [...] We learned some new games, which we now play in Henvey too," reflects Angèle. "I think parents appreciated it. [...] Kids were enjoying what they were doing and I think that meant a lot to parents. If they know their kids are having a good time then they can relax a little bit, even when there is something so worrisome on the horizon."

Fortunately, there was no fire damage and after two and a half weeks, Angèle and the other Henvey Inlet First Nation residents were able to return home. The following week, Angèle resumed her regular program. "[The] youth are surprisingly adaptable and resilient. They slipped back into programming." No doubt in part because of Angèle remaining present and supportive for them during the evacuation.



One of the activities that Angèle helped organize during the evacuation was rock climbing.

# INTERGENERATIONAL FUN AT BASEBALL CAMP

In August 2018, the members of Driftpile Cree Nation, a community situated just over 3 hours northwest of Edmonton, felt the excitement that comes with Rookie League baseball programming. In partnership with Right To Play and Jays Care Foundation, Driftpile hosted a four-day Rookie League baseball skills camp that attracted 30 youth participants from ages 4 to 17.

Building intergenerational connections is an important component of trauma-informed practice, and was a significant goal for the baseball camp. Creating opportunities for intergenerational connections can strengthen the secure and healthy relationships between children and adults. “Bringing my community together is sometimes challenging,” Community Mentor Charlotte Giroux-Thunder explains. “Sport has the power to bring the community together and help kids to get more involved.”

Parents, guardians and community members had the opportunity to make connections and fun memories with youth at the baseball camp. Members of Driftpile’s Band Council even participated in some slip-and-slide fun at one of the baseball practices! At the end of the camp, the community hosted a youth vs. parents baseball game, followed by a BBQ lunch. “We love to see the kids playing against the parents because this is always fun,” says Charlotte.

A coaching clinic was also on offer for interested community members. “Around 8 parents came to the coaching clinic,” Charlotte says. “They were there to learn more about baseball and how to teach and coach in different ways. Now they teach their own kids, as we have a league in our town community.”

Charlotte reaffirms the power of sport to bring people together and build positivity in the community. “The event had a great impact in our community,” she says. “Playing provides a more positive outlook in their everyday lifestyle and brings more positivity into their lives.”



*Driftpile Band Council members and other attendees hit up the slip-and-slide at a Rookie League baseball practice.*



Every year, there are a growing number of PLAY partners that are more ready to sustain their program at a community-level. We aim to support these communities to create a focused plan for program sustainability, and help them achieve it. To do this, we recognize the need to work with broader community networks to support one amazing local Community Mentor. This could mean additional youth workers, program management staff or leadership – all working together to lead a sustainable child and youth program.

### VISION:

*We will refine the ways we support communities to build sustainable programs, ensuring that our approach is intentional and responsive to the needs of individual community partners.*



### How we're living our vision...

## A STRONG PROGRAM'S JOURNEY TO SUSTAINABILITY

Youth programming in Aamjiwnaang First Nation has come a long way since Tony Jacobs first launched the PLAY program in his community.

In 2012, a 31-year old Tony began his final year of a Sports and Recreation Administration program at Lambton College when he was hired for the Community Mentor position. "I was still in college full-time and I had 3-days' notice that I had to be in Parry Sound [for training]," Tony recalls, "I was in school full time and full time as a CM". At the time, there was a drop-in program for youth in Aamjiwnaang, however, structured activities were limited.

Six years later, under the direction of Tony and the youth participants, the PLAY program has become a staple in Aamjiwnaang. The program is so popular with youth that you can hear chatter about it in the halls of their school. "They own the program and are proud to be a part of it," says Tony.

This year, Aamjiwnaang's PLAY program set out on a path toward program sustainability. Tony's goal is to put all the pieces in place to sustain the program beyond himself and Right To Play. When the time comes for the Right To Play partnership to end and for him to step away, he wants the program to continue to operate and make an impact in the community. "[With] the amount of experience that I have running the program and the team that we have in place now, we don't need as much support from Right To Play," says Tony.



*Tony Jacobs (center, front) with some of the youth from Aamjiwnaang's PLAY program.*

The first piece that Tony secured towards this goal was program funding. In November, he pitched his program to the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integrated Network's (LHIN) Board of Directors. With \$104,000 available from LHIN for Indigenous youth and mental health, Tony submitted a proposal for \$69,000. "I went to their head office and it was like Dragon's Den or Shark Tank," Tony describes. "I was the first to go up and pitch my program. I spoke about who we are, who the youth are, how we do the program."

Tony's proposal covered everything from salaries for the Community Mentor and a Mental Health worker, to program costs and Elder honorariums. The proposal also included budget for cultural programming, an interest that was expressed by youth through needs assessments conducted by Tony. Competing against three others, Tony walked away with \$63,000 of the available funding, confirmed for the next two years!

With this funding secured, a mental health worker was hired in May to support the program. "Now that we have the mental health support, we have youth that are being referred to [our program] by other organizations, like our child and welfare group."

Next year, Aamjiwnaang will officially join 6 other Right To Play communities that are taking steps to full community ownership of their programs. With this goal in mind, Tony looks forward to learning more about financial and monitoring and evaluation systems, and is excited about rebranding the program with input from the youth.

## VISION FOR 2018-19 & BEYOND

As we look to 2020 and beyond, we are excited to learn, grow and improve, so that our work alongside community partners best serves young people. At PLAY, we are committed to elevating **youth voice** and supporting young people to take action, to applying **trauma-informed** practices, to encouraging intergenerational relationship building, and to strengthening the ways we support communities in increasing their **ownership** of delivering a fun and safe program for children and youth!

## LOOKING FORWARD





**THANK YOU** to our dedicated partners...

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