



RIGHT TO PLAY

INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS

**YEAR IN REVIEW
2025**

PLAY RIGHT TO PLAY RIGHT TO PLAY RIGHT TO PLAY RIGHT



PROTECT. EDUCATE. EMPOWER.

INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS TEAM

It takes a full team (of roughly 23) to support the PLAY program, in partnership with communities and organizations across Canada. We're proud of the work we do, and we appreciate your support – which allows us to do it.



Keep an eye out for team notes on the programs! Orange boxes like this indicate team members' input!

PLAY PROGRAM

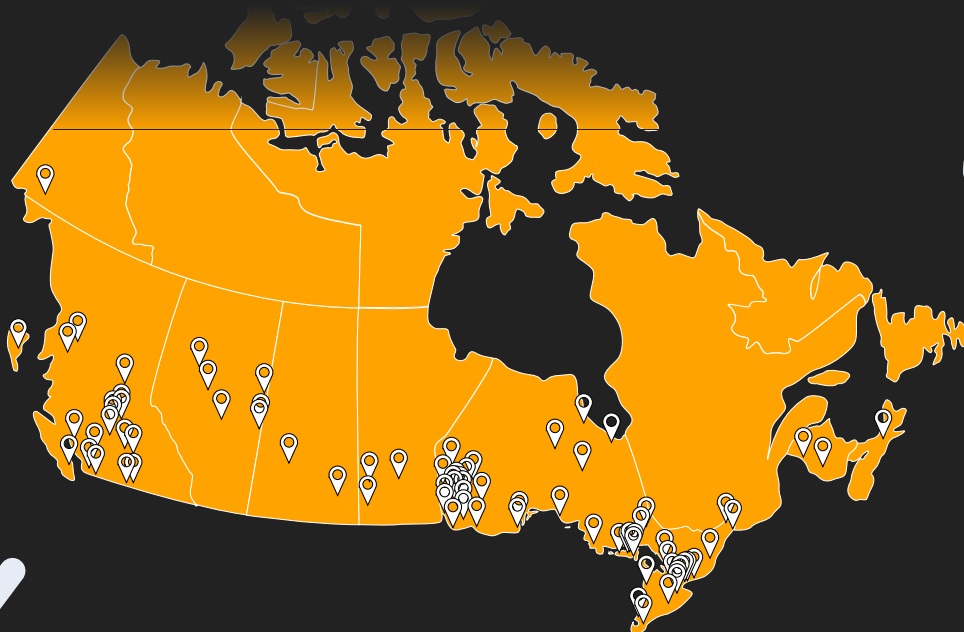
Program Development & Program Enhancement Partnerships

Communities and organizations serving First Nations, Inuit, & Métis children and youth applied to work with Right To Play. Thanks to generous funding from donors, we were able to hold 80 partnerships in 2025.

80 Partners

74 PLAY Partnerships

6 Team Training & Youth Project Partnerships



Why the PLAY Program?

In 2010, at the invitation of Sandy Bay & Moose Cree First Nations, Right To Play began to work alongside community partners to provide child & youth programming.

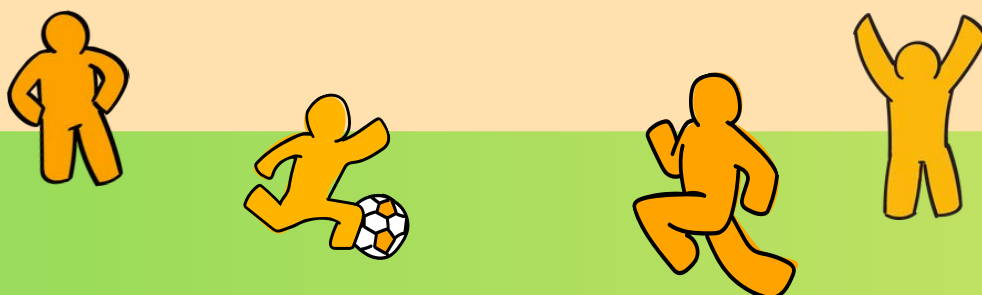


First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities continue to navigate inequitable access to safe and sanitary housing, culturally-relevant education, healthcare, clean water, and food security. These inequities frequently overlap, on top of systemic barriers and racism. Colonial policies have resulted in geographic/economic isolation, and intergenerational trauma, which has led to Indigenous communities being disproportionately affected by toxic drugs & addiction, experiencing higher rates of violence and incarceration, and higher rates of foster care placement.



For generations, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have shown incredible resilience in protecting their cultures, identities, and connections to land, ice, and water, despite policies that sought to disrupt and assimilate them.

Community Partners with the PLAY Program provide safe places for children and youth to play as part of community-run solutions.



Community Mentors (CMs) like **Cyah** provided 8+ hours/week of play-based programming for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children and youth across Canada. Cyah is a former PLAY participant.



“

I aim to help them make their self-esteem higher than it is, and just get them to be more comfortable, and help them learn some valuable life lessons too—while playing.

**- Cyah, Community Mentor,
Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation**

With your help, we covered

50%

of salary costs

for **93** Community Mentors
(up to \$22,500)

We also provided

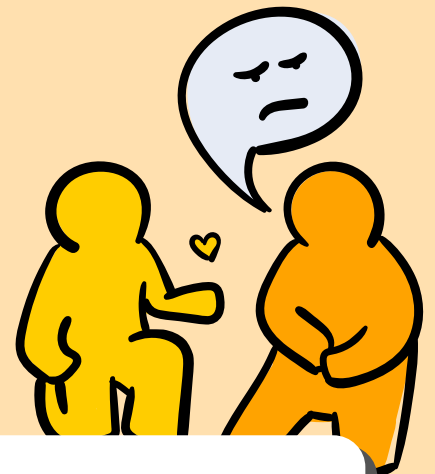
- training & resources
- ongoing coaching
- evaluation support
- events & opportunities
- program budget

(up to \$6,000)

**In 2025, Community Mentors used play as
a way to build skills:**

90% of participants adopt positive coping skills when angry, sad or upset

83% of participants have access to someone to talk to when they feel sad or stressed.



“

I play basketball, listening to music, watch a movie based on my current mood, and if I feel like talking to someone I will reach out to one of my family members

- PLAY Participant on their coping strategies



August 11-15, 2025

We hosted Youth
Leadership Symposium
& National Gathering for

34

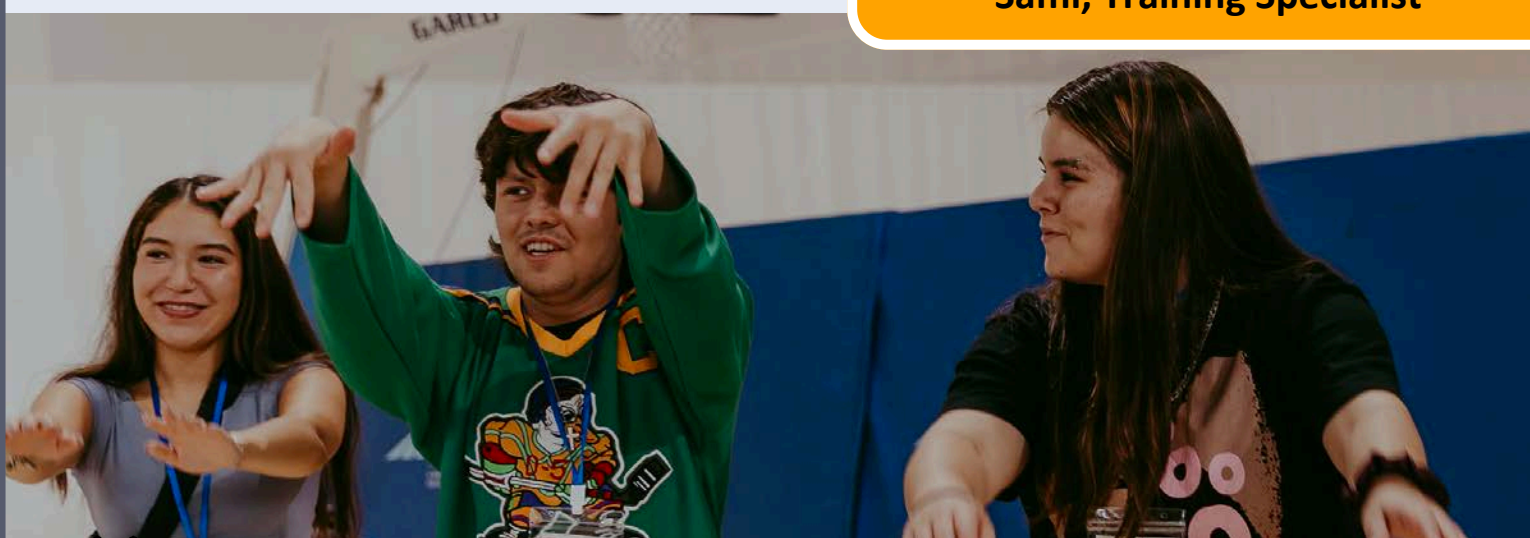
young leaders &

34

youth workers

The event provided opportunities to meet, share, and learn, from each other, our team, and other partners who are experts in play, culture, and community work.

The event created opportunities for knowledge exchange between participants representing 27 different community partnerships!
- Sami, Training Specialist



“... I feel more confident going back, like I felt like less confident coming...

- YLS Participant



IN 2025, RIGHT TO PLAY partnered with 80 different communities and organizations to support them as they provided programming for at least 4,914 Indigenous children and youth

Atlantic

Bilijk First Nation
Tobique Youth Centre
Paqtnkek Education Centre*

**Team Training Partnership*

244
PLAY Program
participants

OTHER WAYS TO PLAY

YOUTH PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

- Work on a short term project to give youth new opportunities with coaching calls, workshops, and program cost reimbursement to improve the wellbeing of Indigenous children & youth through play.

TEAM TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

- Choose from ten different workshops from Program Officers covering topics like Play-based Learning, Inclusion, Team-building, & Youth Voice, to enhance staff skills, knowledge, and team dynamics.

Central

2,451

PLAY Program
participants



We don't work
in Québec - but
we are working
on a feasibility
report to see
our options to
expand here!

Aamjiwnaang First Nation
Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance of Northern
Ontario
Attawapiskat First Nation
Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation
Atikameksheng Anishnawbek
Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation
Batchewana First Nation
Beausoleil First Nation
Change Through Sport*
Durham Community Health Centre
Constance Lake First Nation
ENAGB Indigenous Youth Agency
Fort William First Nation
Grandmother's Voice*
Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
Inuuqatigiit Centre
Kenora Chief's Advisory - MWG Youth &
Family Wellness Camp
Lake of the Woods Wrestling Club*
Marten Falls First Nation*
Matawa Learning Centre
M'Chigeeng First Nation
Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte
Naotkamegwaning First Nation

Native Child & Family Services of Toronto
Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg
Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation
Niisaachewan Anishinaabe Nation
Northwest Angle #33 First Nation
Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation
Pikangikum First Nation
Plenty Canada
Sheguiandah First Nation
Sheshegwaning First Nation
Shoal Lake #40 First Nation
Six Nations of the Grand River
Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre*
Waabshki Penasi School
Wabaseemoong Independent Nations
Wabauskang First Nation
Wahnapitae First Nation
Wasauksing First Nation
Washagamis Bay First Nation
Wauzhushk Onigum Nation
Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

**Youth Project or Team Training Partnership*

Central

Do you feel that you've learned any new leadership skills that you didn't have before?

“

Oh yeah, probably confidence. Not only in just, like, myself - probably confidence in talking to other people. That's probably the most important thing about having leadership - is that you have confidence so that you can represent it for others.

- Liz A, Youth Leader in the PLAY Program.



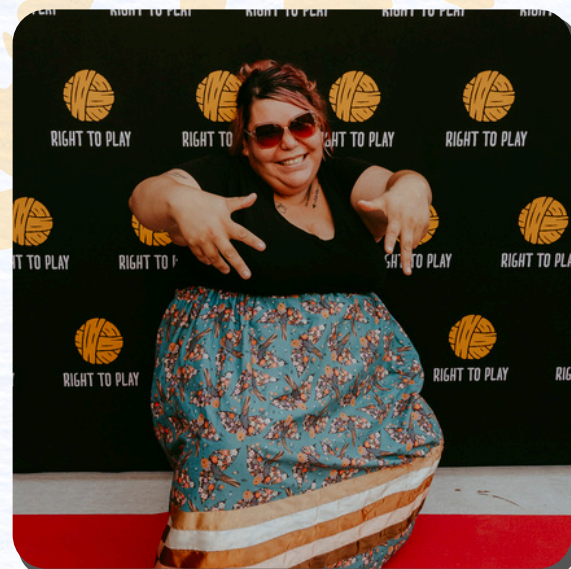
“

...chi-miigwech - thank you so much. Right To Play has been something that our young people look forward to, that brings community together in a safe environment in a place that encourages friendship and, you know, unity. That's what we aim for in Aamjiwnaang First Nation.

- Chief Janelle Nahmabin, Aamjiwnaang First Nation



Prairies



1,352
PLAY Program
participants

Alexander First Nation

Driftpile Cree Nation

Elizabeth Métis Settlement

Fishing Lake Métis Settlement

Janvier Sekweha Youth Centre

Sagitawa Friendship Society

Cowessess First Nation

White Buffalo Youth Lodge

Brandon Friendship Centre

Dauphin Friendship Centre

Fisher River Sport & Recreation

Partnerships Breakdown:

60 First Nations, Inuit, and
Métis Communities

15 Indigenous Organizations

5 Non-Indigenous Organizations serving
Indigenous children & youth

West

816

PLAY Program
participants



Britannia Community Services
Centre Society
Denisiqi Services Society
Esk'etemc First Nation
Gitanyow Human Services
Hiit'aGan.iina Kuuyas Naay
Lower Similkameen Indian Band
Kitselas First Nation
Nanoose First Nation
Nusdeh Yoh Aboriginal Choice
School
Osoyoos Indian Band
Skeetchestn Indian Band
Squamish Nation
Stswecem'c Xget'tem First Nation
Surrey School District #36
Tla'amin First Nation
Tk'emlumps te Secwepemc
Williams Lake First Nation
Xat'sull First Nation

This program plays an important role in helping youth build confidence, strengthen life skills, and develop a sense of belonging. Seeing youth grow more comfortable expressing themselves and feel more connected to their community highlights the meaningful difference this work makes.

- Rebecca, Program Officer

North & Inuit Nunangat



Champagne and Aishihik First Nations

51

PLAY Program
participants



2024-2026 Strategic Plan Notes:

1. Track outcomes for play-based programming

The Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning team released 3 reports, including one on Participatory & Play-Based Evaluation Strategies

2. Develop partnerships with Indigenous organizations

In 2025 we worked with organizations including Aanish Naa Gegii, Toronto Council Fire, & Finding Our Power Together

3. Strategic partnerships & advance policies for well-being

2025 Partnerships include MLSE, Painted Turtle, The Center for Healing and Justice through Sport, Luminato Arts Festival, & more

4. Build financial support for the Indigenous Program.

Over \$4.4M raised and stewarded in 2025 from Institutional, Corporate, Government, & Individual Donors for Canadian Programs.

5. Invest in our people and strengthen organizational effectiveness

In 2025, Indigenous Programs team ran visioning week, and a staff training week, on top of ongoing Indigenous learning initiatives.

6. Increase awareness and engagement of the PLAY Program

In 2025, we amplified authentic, community-led impact stories through collaborative approaches and participatory methods centered on Indigenous voices.

2025 in Numbers:

Children & Youth reached:

4,914

49% Girls, Gender non-binary, or other

51% Boys

5 & Under: 146 (3%)



104 participants were reached through Youth Project Partnerships, which may be shorter term than the PLAY Program.

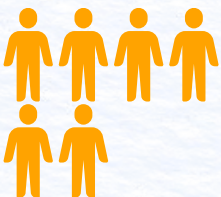
6 - 12: 2,557 (52%)



13 - 18: 1,903 (39%)



18+: 308 (6%)



Children and Youth reached through the PLAY Program build on their learning from one week to the next. Programs see equal participation rates of girls and boys across all provinces, demonstrating that community partners' programs are creating safe and inclusive play-spaces for both girls and boys.

- Kieran & Alejandra, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Team

7,698

Program
Sessions

27,100

Programming
Hours



Community Events

149 Intergenerational Events*

14 Youth-Led Initiatives



163 Total events with 4,688 adult attendees

and 4,351 child attendees

**Intergenerational events bring together community members of all ages to connect through playful activities and build healthy relationships.*

Community Mentors (CMs)

Community Mentors Hired:

93 covering 80 Communities & Organizations across Canada

30% with less than a year of experience

41% with 1-3 years experience

16% with 3-5 years experience

13% with 5+ years experience (5 CMs had 8-10 years of experience!)

71 Community Mentors attended 1 or more of our training events

Jr Community Mentors Hired to Support PLAY:

14 Jr CMs hired (June - August, Full time) **12** Jr CMs hired October - December, Part-time)

“ The most positive aspects of my placement is getting to meet many youth throughout different communities and connecting with them through programming. - **Jr CM** ”

18 Attended at least one training

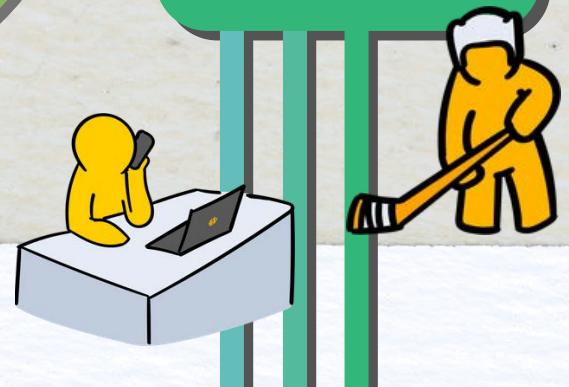
“ Working with the kids and having fun with them and creating a relationship with each individual. - **Jr CM on Positive aspects of the experience** ”

Building Capacity in Play-Based Programs

12 Training Events



Topics



Expectations & Right To Play Support Systems

Arts-Based Play, Cultural Teachings, Play-Based Learning, Youth Voice, Building Partnerships, Brain Development & Learning, Sports, Sharing & Celebration

Inclusion in Sport, Supporting Mental Health, Sharing & Celebrating

Partnerships with Right To Play

Corporate Funding and Relationship Building

Managing Behaviour

Measuring Wellness & Leadership

90%

frequently engage in physical activities and/or sports (every day or a few times per week), adopting a more active lifestyle.

89%

frequently incorporate (3 times/week - daily) a healthy food option in their snacks/meals.

90%

have knowledge of healthy food options.

feel confident about their leadership skills.

95%

enjoy setting and working towards achieving goals for themselves.

86%

93%
reported
improved health
and wellbeing.

90%

indicate that the program has helped them learn about and enjoy their family/ community culture and traditions.

90%

care about other peoples' feelings (empathy).

92%

feel confident about themselves.

94%

practice healthy relationships by helping other youth, playing with others, and collaborating with others.

What was your favourite part of program?

“

My favourite is playing hockey

“

Being able to play soccer with friends

“

Healthy banana splits,
boardgames, having a place
to meet new people and
make friends

“

Trips for cultural
activities

“

Ribbon skirt
workshops
kayaking medicine
picking baking
cooking beading

90%

of Community
Mentors reported
improvement in their
knowledge and skills of
Right To Play's play-
based methodology and
approaches.

“

Seeing friends and family

“

Me and my friends helping each other

“

Connecting with others, I
just moved here and, it has
really helped me [make]
friends and have fun

“

It is very fun we play all different
games, and [my Community
Mentor] makes us feel all
included in all games and makes
all the teams fun

All of this, made possible by:

AltaGas Ltd.

Canada Post Community

Foundation

Canadian Heritage

Canadian Postcode Lottery

Foundation

CIBC

Co-operators Community

Fund

Crown vs. Defence Charity

Hockey Game

Dentons Canada LLP

Direct Plus Food Group

Enbridge Gas Distribution

Inc.

Flavelle Family Foundation

Friedrichsen Cooper Family

Fund at Toronto Foundation

GoodLife Fitness

Government of Ontario

Indigenous Services Canada

Investors Group

Ivari

Jackman Foundation

JP Morgan Chase & Co

Larry and Judy Tanenbaum

Family Foundation

LEGO Foundation

M.E.H. Foundation

MLSE Foundation

Moody's Canada

National Bank of Canada

New Balance US Foundation

Nike N7 Foundation

Nuclear Waste Management

Organization

Ontario Council of Agencies

Serving Immigrants

Patricia J. Gouinlock

Peterborough KM Hunter

Charitable Foundation

Power Corporation of

Canada

R. Howard Webster

Foundation

RBC Capital Markets

Royal Bank of Canada

S.C. Johnson and Son,

Limited

Scotiabank

Scoria World

Shorcan Brokers Limited

Sunlife Financial

The BLG Foundation

The Charles H. Ivey

Foundation

The Henry White Kinnear

Foundation

The Learning Enrichment

Foundation

The PepsiCo Canada

Foundation

The William and Nona

Heaslip Foundation

Tripp/Smith Family

Foundation

Wheaton Precious Metals



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