



RIGHT TO PLAY

INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS

YEAR IN REVIEW

2025

PLAY

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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.

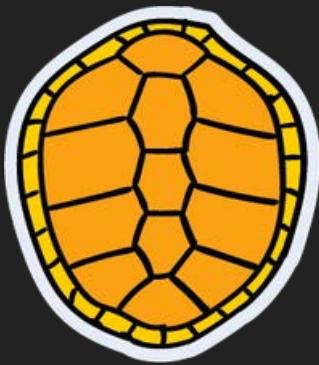


## Why the PLAY Program?

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

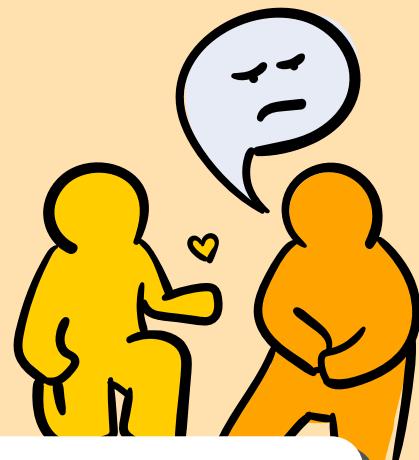
- training & resources
- ongoing coaching
- evaluation support
- events & opportunities
- program budget

(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



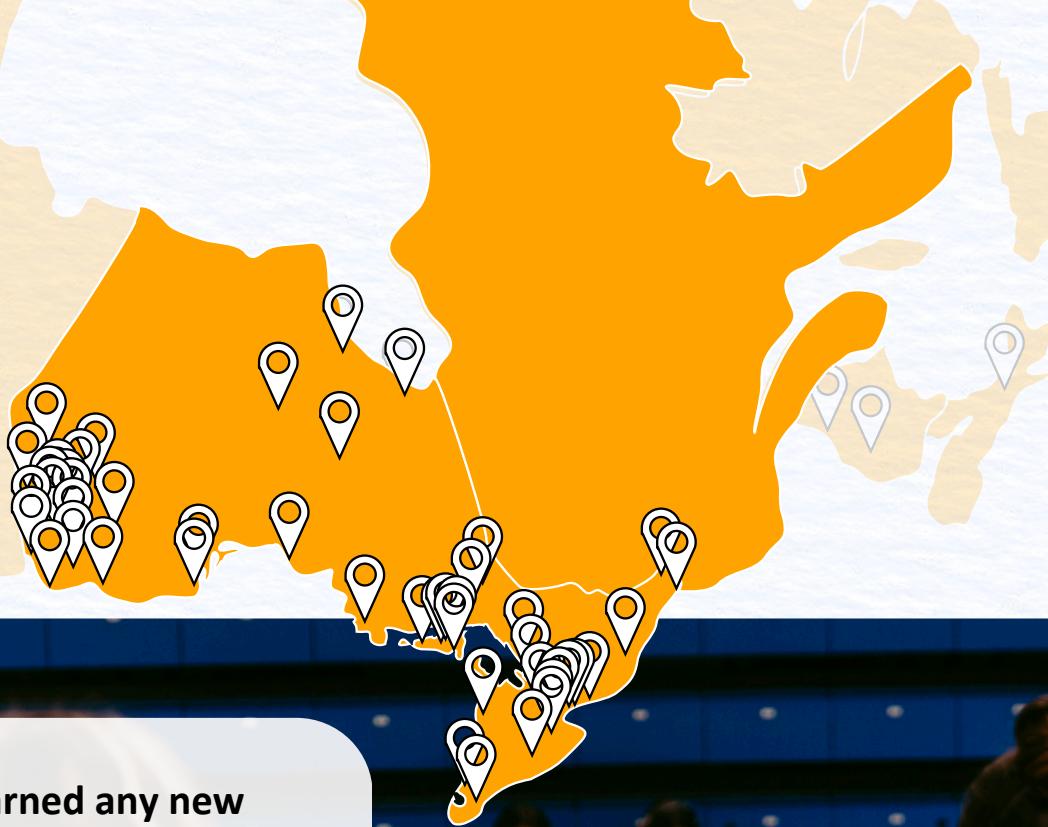
A map of Ontario and Quebec is shown in the background. Numerous orange location pins are scattered across the map, with a higher concentration in the southern and eastern parts of Ontario. The pins are also present in the Great Lakes and along the southern border of Quebec.

- Aamjiwnaang First Nation
- Aboriginal Peoples' Alliance of Northern Ontario
- Attawapiskat First Nation
- Asubpeeschoewagong 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
- Naotkamegwanning 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
- Wahnipitae First Nation
- Wasauksing First Nation
- Washagamis Bay First Nation
- Wauzhushk Onigum Nation
- Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory

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

# 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.**



“

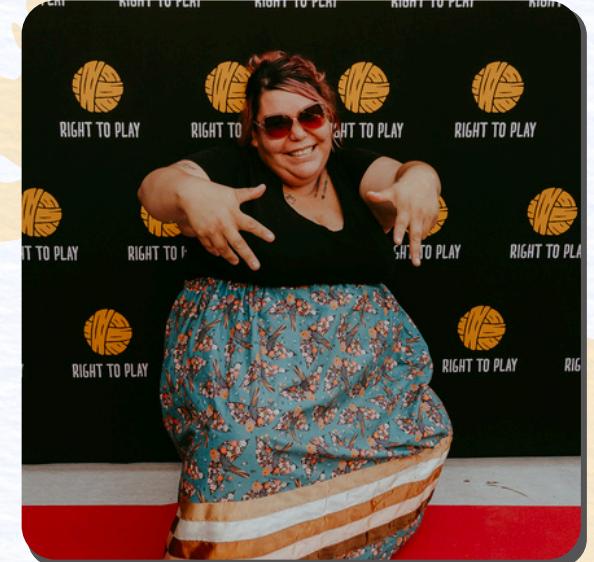
...chi-miigwech - thank you so much. Right To Play has been something that our young people look forward to, that brings community together in a safe environment in a place that encourages friendship and, you know, unity.

That's what we aim for in Aamjiwinaang First Nation.

**- Chief Janelle Nahmabin, Aamjiwinaang 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  
Hii'taGan.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'süll 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



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:



4,944

49% Girls, Gender non-binary, or other

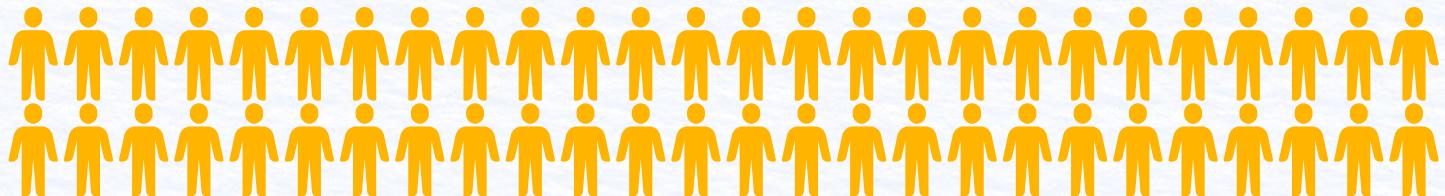
51% Boys

**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



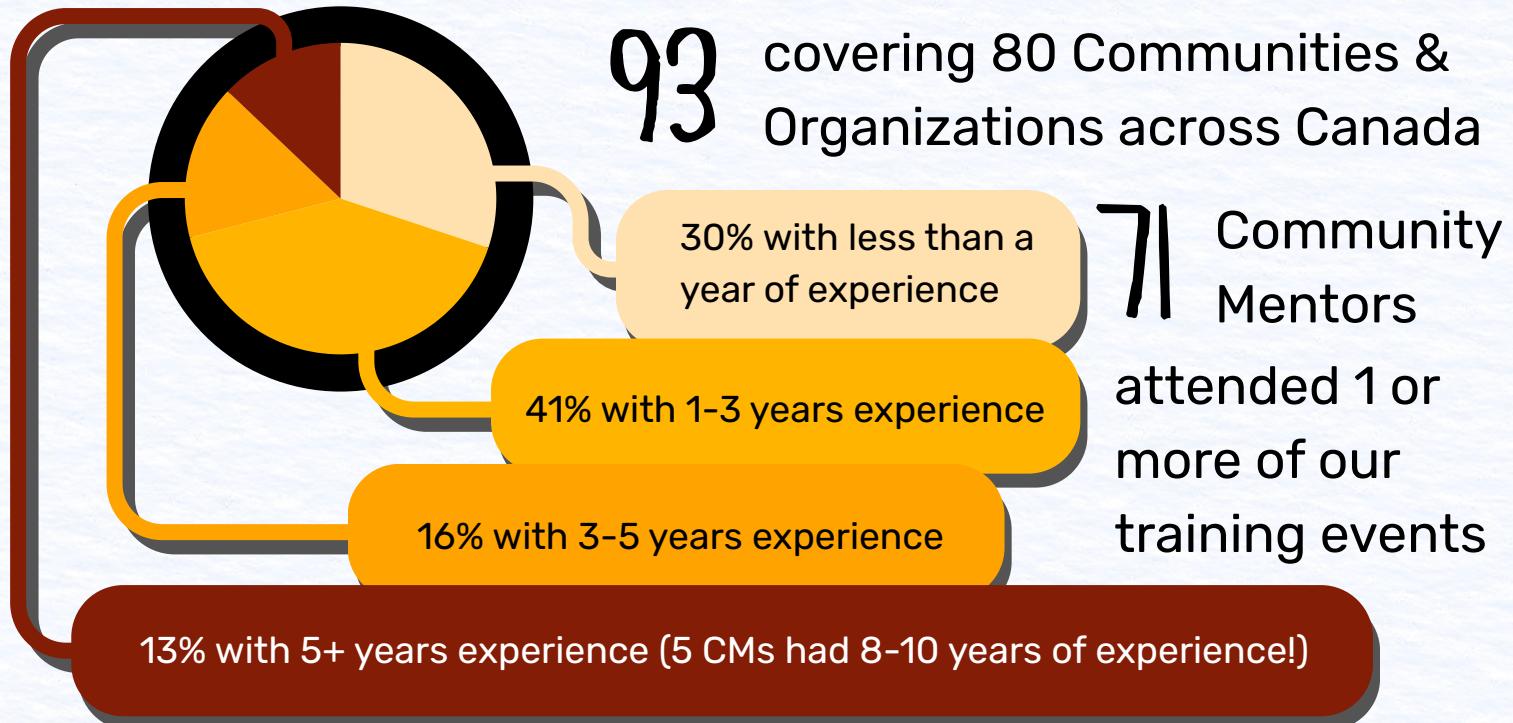
163 Total events with 4,688 adult attendees

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:



## Jr Community Mentors Hired to Support PLAY:

14 Jr CMs hired (June - August, Full time)

12 Jr CMs hired October - December, Part-time)

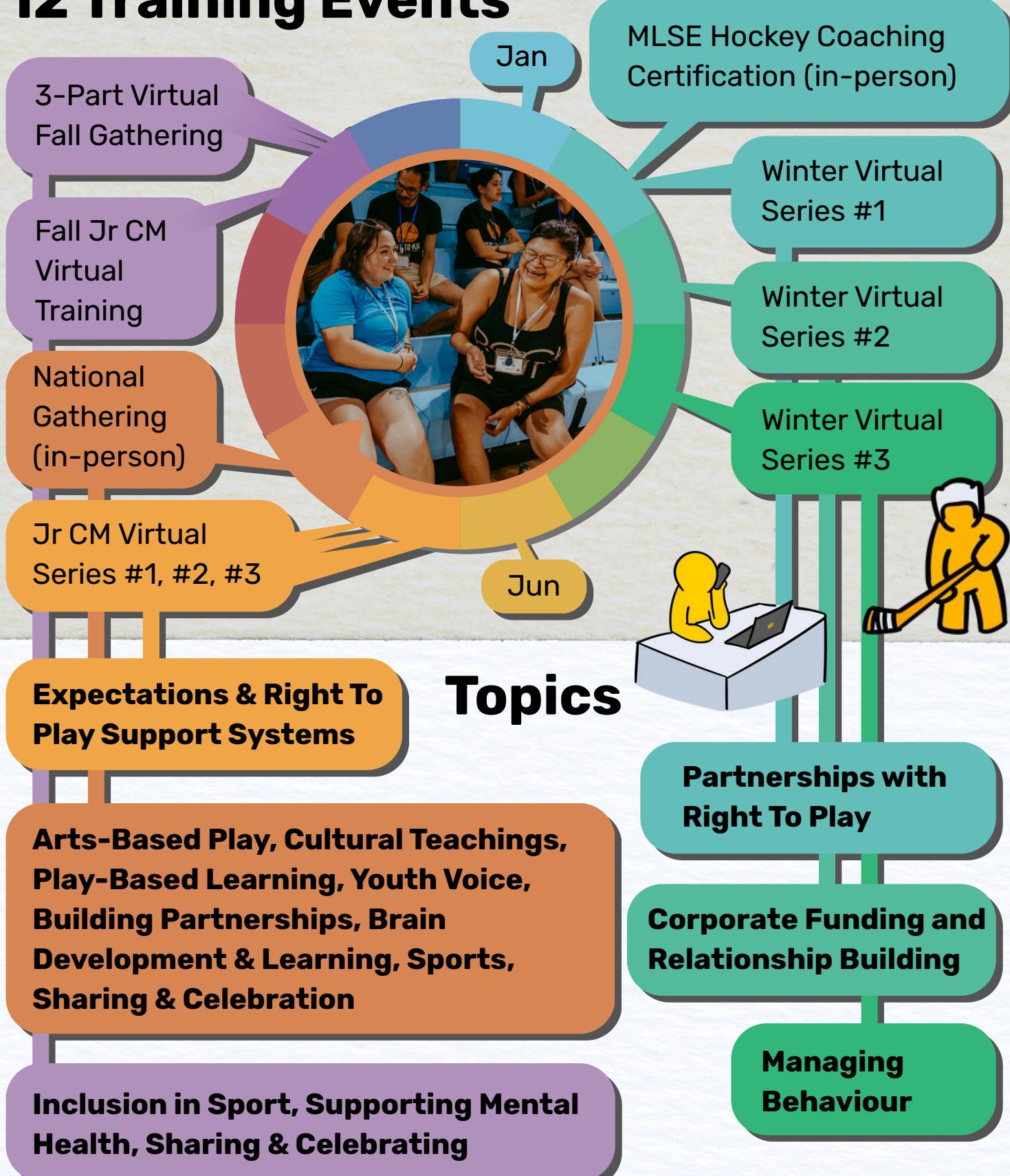
“ The most positive aspects of my placement is getting to meet many youth throughout different communities and connecting with them through programming. - **Jr CM**

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



# Measuring Wellness & Leadership

feel confident about their leadership skills.

95%

86%

enjoy setting and working towards achieving goals for themselves.

feel confident about themselves.

90%

89%

90%

93%  
reported improved health and wellbeing.

90%

92%

94%

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

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

have knowledge of healthy food options.

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

care about other peoples' feelings (empathy).

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

# What was your favourite part of program?

**90%** of Community Mentors reported improvement in their knowledge and skills of Right To Play's play-based methodology and approaches.

“ 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

“ 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.  | Jackman Foundation                             | Royal Bank of Canada                    |
| Canada Post Community Foundation                      | JP Morgan Chase & Co                           | S.C. Johnson and Son, Limited           |
| Canadian Heritage                                     | Larry and Judy Tanenbaum Family Foundation     | Scotiabank                              |
| Canadian Postcode Lottery Foundation                  | LEGO Foundation                                | Scoria World                            |
| CIBC  | M.E.H. Foundation                              | Shorcan Brokers Limited                 |
| Co-operators Community Fund                           | MLSE Foundation                                | Sunlife Financial                       |
| Crown vs. Defence Charity Hockey Game                 | Moody's Canada                                 | The BLG Foundation                      |
| Dentons Canada LLP                                    | National Bank of Canada                        | The Charles H. Ivey Foundation          |
| Direct Plus Food Group                                | New Balance US Foundation                      | The Henry White Kinnear Foundation      |
| Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc.                        | Nike N7 Foundation                             | The Learning Enrichment Foundation      |
| Flavelle Family Foundation                            | Nuclear Waste Management Organization          | The PepsiCo Canada Foundation           |
| Friedrichsen Cooper Family Fund at Toronto Foundation | Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants | The William and Nona Heaslip Foundation |
| GoodLife Fitness                                      | Patricia J. Gouinlock                          | Tripp/Smith Family Foundation           |
| Government of Ontario                                 | Peterborough KM Hunter Charitable Foundation   | Wheaton Precious Metals                 |
| Indigenous Services Canada                            | Power Corporation of Canada                    |   |
| Investors Group                                       | R. Howard Webster Foundation                   |   |
| Ivari   | RBC Capital Markets                            |   |



# RIGHT TO PLAY



## INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS