



RIGHT TO PLAY

PLAY Program Impact Report

May 2025 - August 2025

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026: Updates

The Indigenous Programs team's 2024-2026 revised strategic directions align with Right To Play International's increasing focus on scale and impact. Below are updates from May to August 2025.

Share Capacity

- 37 youth workers attended at least one training session between May and August. Participants were able to expand their skills and knowledge bases to better use play-based approaches to meet the wellbeing priorities of their community.
- 34 youth participated in learning sessions with the Center for Healing and Justice through Sport in collaboration with the Nike N7 Fund, the MLSE LaunchPad, Painted Turtle Arts Camp, and LEGO Play Agent trainers.

Enhance Commitment to Youth Leadership & Voice:

- The 2025 National Gathering/Youth Leadership Symposium (NGYLS) were co-designed with the Youth Leadership Council for the first time in PLAY history.
- A youth-led and youth-centered session was developed and implemented during the 2025 NGYLS.
- Youth-led Sharing Circles were designed and organized for NGYLS.

PLAY Programs by the Numbers

4,652

CHILDREN AND YOUTH REACHED

through PLAY programs and events

54%

OF PARTICIPANTS AGED 6 TO 12

37

COMMUNITY MENTORS REACHED THROUGH TRAINING

From May to August 2025

80

COMMUNITIES & URBAN ORGANIZATIONS *

59 First Nations, 2 Métis Settlements, 1 Inuit Organization, 13 Indigenous Organizations, and 5 Non-Indigenous Organizations partnered with Right To Play

47

INTERGENERATIONAL & YOUTH-LED INITIATIVES

From May to August 2025

2,118

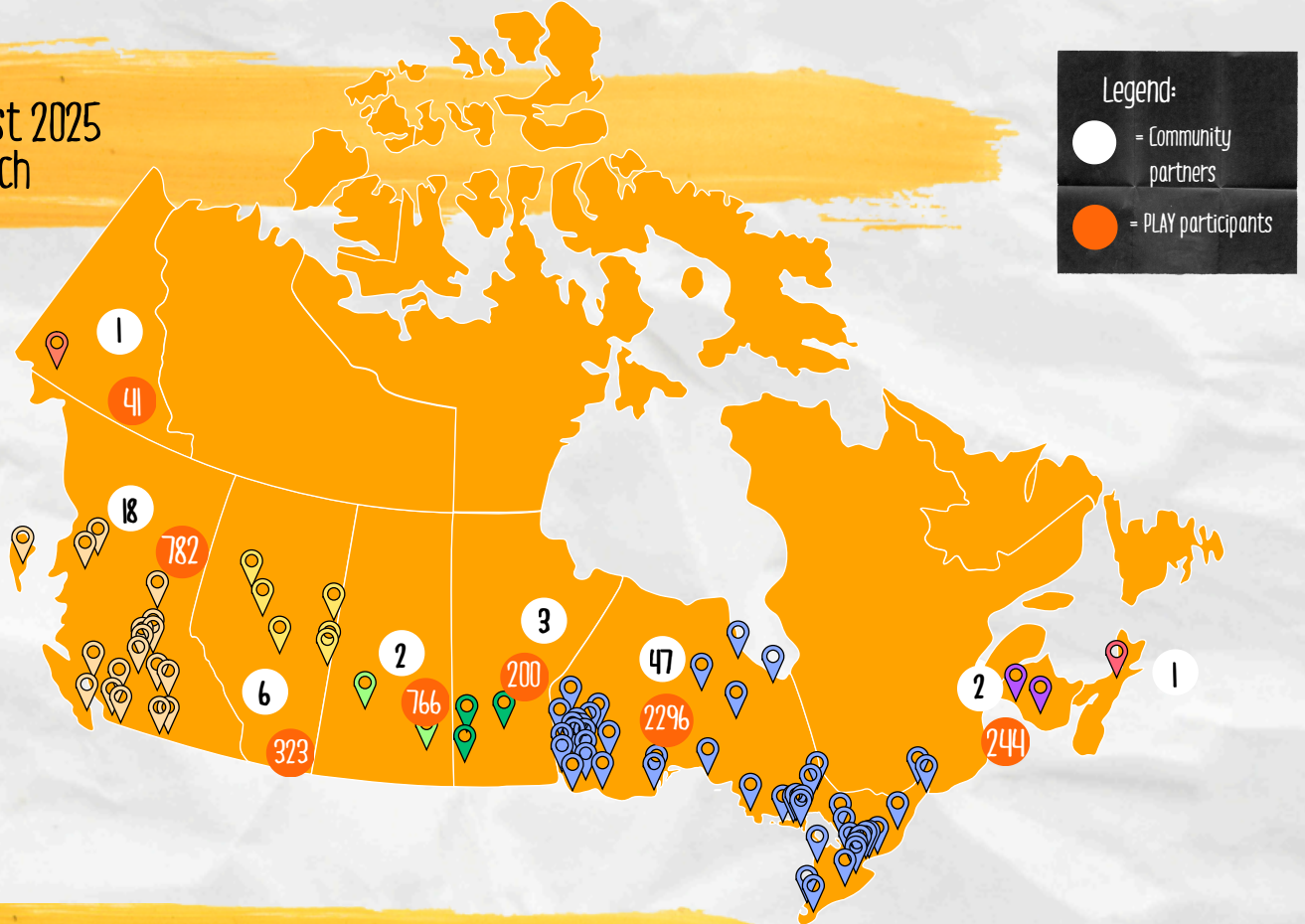
PROGRAM SESSIONS DELIVERED

14

NUMBER OF JUNIOR COMMUNITY MENTORS HIRED AND TRAINED

*Team Training Partners (TTP) do not submit participant data

May to August 2025
Program Reach



2025 National Gathering and Youth Leadership Symposium



The Indigenous Programs team hosted its annual National Gathering and Youth Leadership Symposium (NG/YLS) in August! For five days, over 70 youth, mentors, supervisors, and chaperones from partner communities came together on the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus. There were performance play sessions with the Painted Turtle Arts Camp, and specialized trainings focused on play-based learning, goal-setting and creative expression. Guests from the Center for Healing and Justice through Sport in collaboration with the Nike N7 Fund and the LEGO company's learning-through-play initiative came to campus to lead

workshops. The whole group even made its way downtown to the Maple Leaf Sport and Entertainment's (MLSE) LaunchPad for a morning of skill-building through basketball training!

Attendees developed new capacities, played all sorts of games, and built friendships that now reach across hundreds of kilometers. Of course, there was plenty of evening karaoke and self-serve soft serve ice cream to keep things going along the way. It's hard work, building a future together—but it can be a lot of fun, too!



COMMUNITY STORY

How the Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth, and Families builds play programming for youth on youth's terms.



Youth and families come from all over to attend programming at the Inuuqatigiit Centre for Inuit Children, Youth and Families. Located in Ottawa, the Centre serves not only Inuit who live in the city proper, but those who live in the larger National Capital Region, as well. "Some of [our youth] come from across the city and that's a forty-minute to an hour van ride, often times in both directions," explains Director of Operations Jonah Petric.

"I think our ability to meet those youth where they're at as they come in... It makes them feel okay to not be okay, and that's a huge piece," Jonah goes on to say. "The team's done a really great job of being able to pivot, being able to support those individuals." Camden Nicholson, the Right To Play Community Mentor (CM) and Programs Coordinator at the Centre, adds, "there have been multiple youth who, [when they first] showed up, weren't in the greatest mood. And then, a week later, they showed up and they were like, oh, I'm actually glad to be here." And little wonder; the programming that Jonah, Camden and their peers have developed is directly influenced by both attendees' interests and identities.

The daily routine for youth at the Centre is a combination of play-based learning and cultural development. In this way, Camden explains, structured activities are kept fresh and interesting for youth, preserving participant longevity and growth over time.

The team has worked with Program Officer Jamie Black for the last twelve months to nurture this balance. And throughout, they have been guided by the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) Principles. A consistent network of Knowledge Keepers, Elders, and community members is present, creating spaces for youth to learn Inuit stories, teachings, crafts, and games. When participants express a love for a particular activity, the team is sure to include it in future. And even if there's a demand for an activity that the staff doesn't feel comfortable leading, they will do

their best to help their youth access it. "Like a beading workshop," Camden remarks; "I'm not really one who knows how to bead. But if the kids want to bead, then I'll get all the supplies for them... I would most likely get the materials that they want so they can experience or explore different things that they might be interested in."



COMMUNITY STORY (cont'd)

Participants at the Inuuqatigiit Centre have also seen their play opportunities expand over the last twelve months, thanks to the team's responsive approaches. After teen attendees expressed a wish for more Friday programming in the autumn of 2024, Camden created a brand new biweekly open gym series. "Every second week they're back and they're ready to go," Jonah explains. "They're taking the initiative to plan that into their evenings and to come and to be there."



And for the youth who don't play basketball, or aren't yet old enough to attend on Friday nights, open gym has still become an important part of their Centre experience, too. Sports equipment for other games (like badminton, soccer, and hockey) is also available on Friday nights. And during weekday program, attendees get their own free play time, using sports equipment, mats, and their imaginations however they see fit.

There have been noticeable increases in participant focus and enthusiasm at the Centre since these open sessions launched. Camden lays out why he thinks this is the case: "if [the youth] were just sitting at school for like six

hours... [they] only really had like an hour in the six hours to express themselves, run around... So, if they come to after-school and they're just sitting there, a lot of them feel disconnected or lethargic and like they don't really want to be there." A buffer of free play allows for program attendees to expend energy, engage in personal expression, and self-regulate before transitioning fully into the flow of after-school programming. More structured play-based learning can then come to the fore, and participants are better prepared to dive in.

When asked a final question about where and when joy appears in programming, Camden is quick to highlight the necessities of reliable people and dependable routines. And not only for attendees-- for staff, too. Consistency, even in moments of unpredictability, makes joy more regularly and readily available. "Be able to feel ok when programming isn't going the way you want it to be," he reflects. "Don't be afraid to switch it up. Sometimes, I've most definitely had some programming where, you know, I want to do this, but as we're doing it, none of the kids felt engaged and stuff like that. Be able to switch and think on the fly, or possibly have a second plan, something to have in your back pocket."

In other words? Meet participants where they're at, give them freedom to learn and to grow alongside the community, and who knows what's possible? Be excited about being there, and you just might get to find out.