



# Canada

## BRINGING RINGETTE BACK TO THE NORTH



**ERIN VAN GULIK**

Safe Sport and Sport Development Manager - Ringette Canada

*Ringette Canada acknowledges that our head office is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People.*



# BACKGROUND



- Ringette had been absent from the NWT for almost 20 years
- Ringette Canada partnered with Dehcho Physical Literacy to apply for funding through the Government of Canada's Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities (SSDIC) program
  - Program is a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action





# PROJECT GOALS



- **Overall goals:**

- Increase the number of participants in ringette in the NWT (with a focus on Indigenous girls and women);
- Increase the overall physical health of participants through structured play & physical activity;
- Train coaches and volunteers to ensure long-term sustainability of the program and ringette's return to the North.



# PROJECT OVERVIEW



Original Project Plan (Anticipated start date of April 2020)

- 8 targeted communities within the Dehcho and South Slave regions.
- Multiple short-term outreach teams.
- Gym and on-ice ringette.
- Jamborees to bring together different communities.
- Coach / Volunteer in-person training sessions.

Plans had to be adapted while keeping in mind:

- Overall project goals,
- Community and provincial COVID-19 guidelines,
- Guidance of community partners.



# FEBRUARY- MARCH 2021



- Hired outreach intern to stay in the communities for 7 weeks to lead programming (including 2 week quarantine)
- Lead both Gym Ringette and on-ice sessions
  - Sessions held in Hay River, Fort Providence, Fort Simpson and Samba K'e
- Lead virtual programming through P.L.A.Y NWT series for those in communities we weren't able to reach in person due to restrictions
- Reached 187 children and youth across 4 communities with many participating in multiple sessions





# HAY RIVER SKILLS COMPETITION



- Held two days of skills clinics followed by a skills competition in our last week
- All received participation certificates along with lots of giveaways
- Prizes for the winners of each age category
- Great community engagement
- Positive feedback from participants, caregivers and other community members



## The ring's return to the Hub

Hay River included on tour reintroducing ringette to NWT communities

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An initiative to reintroduce the sport of ringette to the NWT has made a stop in Hay River.

Learn to Play Ringette clinics were held in the community for training sessions on March 30 and 31, and skills competitions on April 2.

"It has been out of the territories for many, many years," said Thorsten Gohl of Fort Providence, who organized the clinics for Ringette Canada.

That absence is estimated to be 25 years or more.

Gohl said the national sports organization received federal funding to bring ringette back to the territories with an initial focus on the Deh Cho region.

"There's a two-year plan in place where the first one is just to bring clinics in and see who's interested, maybe find some volunteers," he said, adding the next step would be maybe setting up a territorial sports organization or a league.

Christy Schwartz, a volunteer who

said a good number of people in the NWT have never heard of ringette.

She explained it's a lot like hockey, but with some major differences.

"You're on the ice. You're skating. It's the same equipment," she said. "There's a lot of different rules. There's no offside. There's no icing. There's different rules in place to kind of take the place of those."

Most notably, ringette is played with bladeless sticks and a ring instead of a puck.

Schwartz, who played ringette 25 years ago in Alberta, said she enjoyed pretty much everything about the game.

"But obviously the team camaraderie was big for me, and just love of the sport," she said.

"Getting out and playing every week, and the competition."

The game, which was invented in Canada, is primarily played by females, and is popular in several parts of the country, including Alberta, Quebec, Ontario and the Atlantic Provinces.

The clinics in Hay River attracted interest from both girls and boys.

Schwartz would like to see a ringette league in Hay River.

said.

The clinics in Hay River and elsewhere were guided by Laurence St. Denis, a player and coach from Montreal.

"It's quite big," she said of the game in Quebec. "We play ringette a lot and we have ringette in the Canada Games."

St. Denis said she is excited to introduce the sport to people in the NWT, both children and their parents, and they seemed to like it a lot.

"Everyone was really happy to play a new sport and try something new," she said. "And they were really happy to have me here."

St. Denis said she focused on stick handling with the ring, passing and shooting.

"But skating is 100 per cent the base of ringette," she said.

Gohl noted that the clinics in Hay River attracted about 30 participants, ranging in age from under nine to under 19.

The week before the clinics, ringette was also played with some minor hockey teams and the women's hockey team.

Gohl said ringette clinics have also been presented in the Deh Cho communities of Fort Providence, Nahanni Butte, Kakisa, Sambaa K'e, Fort Simpson, Wrigley, Fort Liard and Jean



Ten-year-old John Bassett tried the sport of ringette dur-



# SUCCESSSES & LEARNINGS



- Turned biggest challenge into opportunity
  - COVID-19 restrictions meant we could send current athlete and coach for an extended time period
  - Able to build relationships with participants and communities
- Flexibility
  - Adapted to evolving public health guidelines
  - Programming had to remain flexible to meet the needs of participants/community
    - Virtual sessions
    - Gym vs on-ice
    - Using existing programs - i.e. hockey
    - Adapting sessions to fit the group
- Strong Community Partners
  - Relied heavily on our partners for guidance
  - Re-engaged individuals who had played ringette as kids and now want to get involved as volunteers/coaches



# WHAT'S NEXT?



- Build off this initial momentum to continue to grow the game into more communities in the North
- Coaching clinics and volunteer training
  - A few coaches have completed Community Sport Initiation course
- Regular gym and on-ice ringette programming
- Inter-community tournaments and jamborees





# QUESTIONS

eriningette.ca

