

# INDIGENOUS ROOKIE LEAGUE PROGRAM REPORT 2018



- Kenora Chiefs Advisory
- Nunavut
- File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council
- Yukon
- Right To Play



## Program Sites

### KCA:

Animakee Wa Zhing 39 First Nation (NWA 37)  
 Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation (Grassy Narrows)  
 Naotkamegwanning First Nation (Whitefish Bay)  
 North West Angle #33 First Nation  
 Ochiichagwe'Babigo'Ining Ojibway Nation (Dalles)  
 Shoal Lake 40 First Nation  
 Wabaseemoong First Nation (Whitedog)  
 Washagamis Bay (Obashkaandagaang) First Nation (Wash Bay)  
 Wauzhushk Onigum (Rat Portage)

### Nunavut:

Hamlet of Arctic Bay  
 Hamlet of Cambridge Bay  
 Hamlet of Clyde River  
 Hamlet of Gjoa Haven  
 Municipality of Hall Beach  
 Municipality of Igloolik  
 Hamlet of Kugaaruk  
 Hamlet of Kugluktuk  
 Hamlet of Pangnirtung  
 Hamlet of Pond Inlet  
 Hamlet of Sanikiluaq  
 Hamlet of Taloyoak  
 Municipality of Coral Harbour  
 Municipality of Kimmirut

### FHQ:

Carry The Kettle  
 Little Black Bear  
 Muscowpetung  
 Nekaneet  
 Okanese  
 Pasqua  
 Peepeekesis  
 Piapot  
 Standing Buffalo  
 Star Blanket  
 Wood Mountain

# Program Map

In 2018 close to 3000 Indigenous children and youth stepped up to the plate as part of Jays Care’s Indigenous Rookie League Programs.

## What is Indigenous Rookie League?

The Jays Care Foundation Indigenous Rookie League program is a summer baseball for development program created and delivered in partnership with First Nations, urban city centres, and Inuit communities across the country.

View the map to see where the Indigenous Rookie League Program took place this summer!



### Yukon:

8 schools and communities participated in the program

- Beaver Creek
- Elijah Smith Elementary School (boys group)
- Elijah Smith Elementary School (girls group)
- Jack Hulland Elementary School
- Kwanlin Dun First Nation
- Old Crow
- Teslin
- Yukon Boys and Girls Club

### Right To Play:

- Animakee Wa Zhing 37
- Attawapiskat
- Beausoleil First Nation
- Beecher Bay
- Big Grassy River
- Chiniki First Nation
- Driftpile Cree Nation
- Duck Bay
- Esketemc First Nation
- Gitanmaax Band
- Gitlax’taamix
- GitseguklaSaik’uz First Nation
- Nigigoonsiminikaaning
- Roseau River First Nation

- Saik’uz First Nation
- Skeetchestn
- St. Theresa Point
- Stswecem’c Xgat’tem First Nation
- Temiskaming Shores
- Wabigoon Lake First Nation
- Wasauksing First Nation
- Webequie
- Whitefish River
- WLIB (Williams Lake)
- Wunnumin Lake

# Goals of Indigenous Rookie League Programs



## CONSISTENCY

To offer a consistent and fun baseball program that children and families can rely on.



## COMMUNITY

To engage as many members of the community as possible, as often as possible, in positive programming.



## CARE

To create an environment where every player feels cared for and is encouraged to care for and encourage others.



## COURAGE

To challenge children, youth and adults to have the courage to show up and step up both on and off the field.



## CONNECTION

To empower community members of all ages to connect with each other through the power of baseball - and connect with members of neighbouring communities.



Reach

**SEVEN  
PROVINCES  
AND  
TERRITORIES**

**2,986  
CHILDREN  
IMPACTED**

**150  
YOUTH,  
STAFF &  
COACHES  
TRAINED**

**57  
COMMUNITIES  
AND  
HAMLETS  
IMPACTED**



# Program Overview

Each Indigenous Rookie League program is built on a foundation of training and capacity building opportunities for local youth workers and coaches. This includes structured baseball practices and tournaments for children and youth as well as intergenerational community events. Jays Care works with each individual community, or group of communities, to tailor the program to fit its own specific goals, needs, and assets. Jays Care works with each individual community, or group of communities, to tailor the program to fit its own specific goals, needs and assets.

The result is the creation of baseball-infused spaces that are safe, positive and fully inclusive of all children and youth no matter what their ability or background. Youth that were once on the sidelines step up to the plate supported by healthy peer relationships and positive adult role-models. This report aims to showcase a snapshot of the variety of programs and impacts from Jays Care Foundation's Indigenous Rookie League Programs in 2018.



# Rewarding Community Spirit in Southern Saskatchewan

Eleven First Nations in Southern Saskatchewan make up the File Hills Qu'appelle Tribal Council (FHQ) all with an on-going commitment to standing together in solidarity, so it came as no surprise when FHQ partnered with Jays Care Foundation to create the inaugural Rookie League Program in 2018. The goals of the program were to promote unity and pride within each community, provide much needed summer programming for youth that build up their skills and self-esteem, and to use sport to provide cross-community healing. FHQ chose to host their Rookie League program over a nine-week period that included weekly practices and inter-community games for all eleven communities.

## What Makes FHQ Rookie League unique?

Traditionally, teams accumulate points based on how many games they win, however in the FHQ inter-community league things get a lot more creative! During this year's program, a new scoring system was devised that rewarded teams not just for wins, but for building cross-community connections. Points could be scored in many different ways like having a local Elder open a game with a traditional teaching, having the Chief throw the first pitch, or by providing food for the visiting team. Each game also included designated innings for both youth and adults to play, which encouraged participation from all the generations.

## The Results

9

**weeks of programming: 2 practices and 1 game per week.**

11

**First Nations in Southern Saskatchewan participated in the FHQ Rookie League program.**

500

**children and youth played in the FHQ Rookie League program.**

500+

**community members attended as spectators and adult players for innings 3 and 7.**

100%

**of coaches reported that as a result of the Jays Care training, they felt more confident and comfortable in their role as a Rookie League coach.**



### Little Black Bear First Nation

Winner of the League's points title. This team earned 4,881 points throughout the season enabling them to win a trip to Toronto to watch the Toronto Blue Jays in the Jays Care Community Clubhouse.

### Okanese First Nation

Winner of the 2018 FHQ Rookie League Championship Tournament and finalist in the Spring Classic tournament against the Treaty 3 Rookie League winners.



"I was nervous to return to my community after post secondary because it had been so long since I had seen everyone, but Rookie League made it so easy to reconnect. It was incredible to witness the dedication of the youth and community members coming together."

**- Bailey Watson, youth participant, Little Black First Nation**

"The opportunity our communities have received through the Jays Care Foundation program has been nothing short of remarkable, it truly has changed lives and transformed communities. I have never witnessed anything like it, having ball diamonds revived since Residential Schools had closed is ground breaking and provided unexpected healing for our community members, witnessing the impact has touched my life forever"

**- Tara Griffith,  
Community member, Okanese First Nation and FHQTC Sports and Recreation Coordinator**

"If I could tell anyone about this Jays Care Rookie League training, I would say... try this out and it will open your eyes to how to be a coach and respect yourself and others."

**- FHQ Coach**



## All-Star Profile

**Bobbi Jo Starr, FHQ Coach**

If you ever visit the community diamond in Star Blanket Cree Nation, the first thing you'll probably hear is Bobbi Jo Starr's infectious laugh as she leads her team in a cheer. She's a favourite on the baseball diamond because of her positive attitude and ability to rally the community around her Rookie League team. Bobbi Jo values her culture, and chose to get involved with Jays Care as a way to re-connect with her community. "I'm having the most fun I've ever had in my life! I'm getting to know my nieces and nephews, and the healing I've experienced through coaching is something I hope other FHQ members can experience," she said. Bobbie Jo is passionate about Jays Care Rookie League and has goals to grow the program and its impact in her community. On the diamond you'll find her leading chants, dances and taking group photos of the hundreds of community members who come together each week in support of the youth on the field.



# Reviving Baseball and Cross-Community Connections in Treaty 3

For the third consecutive year, nine communities in Treaty 3 participated in the Kenora Chiefs Advisory (KCA) Rookie League program. This year, the focus was reviving the love of baseball across the nine communities by engaging all levels of the community to support the physical and mental health of all children and youth.

## What makes KCA Rookie League unique?

For KCA, the first step in achieving this goal was getting all generations out to the ballpark, and much like other Rookie League partners the introduction of a point system that rewarded parental participation in games, the number of coaches that show up to practice, and field maintenance did the trick. What made this year's program unique was the range of special events that were planned to promote further cross-community integration for all 11 participating communities. These additional opportunities provided players, coaches and community members with a chance to further connect and build new relationships.

## Regular practices and games were complemented by events like:

- A Batting Cage Session at the Home Run Sports Training Centre in Winnipeg, where all eight community teams attended bringing a minimum of 15 parents and community members, alongside the coaches and players;
- A Spring Mixer Tournament in Kenora that launched the summer league with over 90 youth participating in mixed teams designed to promote new connections;
- The fourth annual Beyond the Ballpark Tournament in Kenora which acted as the culminating event for the summer league with over 200 players, 15 volunteers, and 50 parents in attendance; and
- An inaugural Fall Classic in Winnipeg where the winners of the KCA Rookie League program played against the winners of the FHQ Rookie League program.



## What the participants had to say:

"This game has given me a lot of courage and a lot of energy."

Baseball brings the best out of us."

"Baseball is like the one thing that makes me happy."

"I don't have any insecurities, I just feel free."

"The Chiefs sanctioned what we are doing and the Elders got behind it. It takes leadership like that to make change."

- Joe Barnes, Executive Director, KCA



## The Results

8

First Nations in Treaty 3 Ontario participated in the KCA Rookie League program

309

Children and youth engaged in weekly Rookie League practices and games throughout the year.

34

weeks of programming were offered throughout the year (2 practices and one game)

56

regular season games took place throughout the summer league.

77%

of participating youth reported feeling PROUD to represent their community in the KCA Rookie League program

100%

of coaches reported building new positive relationships with other community members

100%

of KCA Coaches agreed that they wanted to return to coach in Rookie League next season



## All-Star Profile

### Eric Sinclair, KCA Coach

Coach Eric Sinclair spent most of his summer at the Washagamis Bay First Nation community diamond, showing up extra early to practice in an effort to beat his eager athletes. After the two-hour training sessions ended, Eric would continue playing baseball with his athletes, late into the evening. As the second smallest community in KCA Rookie League, it was a surprise to many when the Wash Bay Wolves won the 2018 KCA Rookie League title. The team worked hard over the course of the season and leveraged their player and community involvement to earn the most points throughout July and August.

Parents praised Eric for being a role model. He encouraged players to sustain a positive attitude, even through losses. Eric's commitment to coaching and mentoring his athletes is what led the team to a win that the entire community can celebrate.

# Building Capacity of Youth Workers with Right To Play

Right To Play's (RTP) Promoting Life-skills in Aboriginal Youth (PLAY) program is an intensive training program for local youth workers designed to support outcome based sport and play programs for children and youth in over 90 communities across Canada. Through a partnership with Jays Care, these youth workers are able to access baseball for development specific training that levels up their support to children and youth. This being the fourth year of this partnership, the goals were set high with a target of reaching between 600-800 children and youth and 400 family and community members across 25 First Nation communities.

## What makes RTP Rookie League unique?

In many First Nation communities, the job of a youth worker can be a challenging one, that's why the partnership between Jays Care and RTP is crucial as it enables a greater level of support for staff working with youth. This support can help set a youth worker up for success and overcome many of the barriers that exist, a great example of this is Lisa McColl, a youth worker from Skeetchestn First Nation, BC. This summer, baseball was just one of the many programs Lisa's community badly needed, and it almost didn't happen as Lisa had no formal baseball training and didn't feel confident she could run it. What changed her mind was the support and guidance she received at Rookie League training. With this injection of confidence in her own ability to run baseball content and the on-going support she received from both RTP and Jays Care over the summer, Rookie League in Skeetchestn came to life, in a big way!



"Baseball programming has been extremely beneficial to the youth and the community. It has brought community members closer to one another, and Jays Care Foundation has shown great support to the community."

- **Community Mentor, Jamie-Lee Wesley, Gitsegukla First Nation**

"This month was... truly a life-time experience. Jays Care Foundation was amazing - the youth participation and Rookie League was awesome. The youth all learned team building and how to be positive and also baseball can be fun and exciting and all the drills and skills can be taught in different ways. I am looking forward to next summer already!"

- **Community Mentor, Charlotte Giroux, Driftpile First Nation**



# The Results

804

children and youth participated regularly in Rookie League programming.

25

First Nations across British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario led Right To Play Rookie League programming this summer.

92%

of participating youth reported feeling more confident since participating in Rookie League.

89%

of participating youth reported feeling proud to be part of a team after participating in Rookie League.

90%

of participating youth reported wanting to continue to be active after participating in Rookie League.

100%

of coaches reported that the Rookie League training helped them to improve their knowledge and skills in running physical and recreational activities as part of Rookie League.



## All-Star Profile

**Lisa McColl, Coach, CM Skeetchestn First Nation**

Each morning Lisa drives the community van picking up kids from their homes and taking them to their respective Day Camps. Baseball is one of the programs the camp offers, and it is a sport that Lisa was not familiar with. However, with the chance to attend Rookie League training, she began to feel confident in her ability to run this program successfully for the youth in Skeetchestn. Once the program started, it was clear that the youth were hooked on baseball because of Lisa's continuous enthusiasm for sharing her knowledge. By the time they walked through their front doors, the youth have had two good meals and snacks, played baseball and spent time working on their literacy. Beyond this they have spent the day learning, laughing, and spending time with their peers. It takes a special person to create the type of positive space that Lisa has achieved, and it is a space that she has built through having a passion for making a difference in the lives of each individual she works with throughout the day.



# Youth Staff Step Up to the Plate in Nunavut

Jays Care and the Recreation and Parks Association of Nunavut (RPAN) partnered for the second summer in a row to deliver Rookie League programming through their Get Happy Summer Day Camp. Spanning 14 communities, this year's partnership was focused on building confidence and leadership skills among youth and getting local children physically active.

## What makes RPAN Rookie League unique?

With record numbers of campers signed up for this year's program, it was important that the camp provided the highest quality of supervision and support through its staff. To do this, RPAN and Jays Care turned to the greatest asset a community has: its youth! Over 80 youth staff from across Nunavut were brought together for an intensive 5 day training workshop that combined baseball for development activities, behaviour management strategies, activity planning and how to create the most inspiring and inclusive camp environment for all campers.

After returning home from the training in Iqualuit, youth went on to deliver between 4-6 weeks of summer day camp in their own communities. Each camp integrated up to four hours of Rookie League programming each week. Campers learned baseball fundamentals and participated in themed sessions, which focused on developing life skills.

## The Results

14

hamlets across Nunavut participated in the Rookie League program.

1,360

children aged 6 to 12 attended camp this summer.

91

youth from 14 communities were hired and trained as camp staff.

"I am so glad I took the part as summer day camp leader for the kids, it was awesome!"

- Youth Staff, Pont Inlet

"Best program so far in Sanikiluaq"

- Assistant Recreation Coordinator, Sanikiluaq





## Cause for Celebration



The summer program has been deemed such a success that RPAN has been funded to run programming year-round. Starting in January, RPAN will be launching an after school program with 7 hamlets. Youth staff from the summer have been hired to support the after school program, extending their employability year-round.



RPAN has enabled all youth staff who complete two staff trainings and complete their contract for the summer camp and the after school program to receive a Tri-Territorial Rec North Leadership Certificate recognizing their work. This will come into effect in 2019.



On June 8th, 2018, the Recreation and Parks Association of Nunavut (RPAN) was recognized for the first time in the Legislative Assembly for youth initiatives, specifically the Get Happy Summer Day Camp staff training that took place June 11th - 15th in partnership with Jays Care Foundation. The Honorable Lorne Kusugak, Minister of Community and Government Services read a statement celebrating the initiative and the youth who participated.



## All-Star Profile

### Quentin Sala, Get Happy Summer Day Camp

Quentin Sala from Sanikiluaq is a recent high school graduate and proud staff member of the Get Happy Summer Day Camp. Quentin's passion for making a difference in his community shone through in the smiles of his campers each day. Because of his dedication, hard work and involvement in the Get Happy Summer Day Camp, Quentin not only landed a full time job with the Municipality of Sanikiluaq as the Assistant Recreation Coordinator, but also was selected by RPAN to attend the 2018 Recreation and Sport Awards Gala. Quentin continues to strive to create more opportunities for youth in his community and will be helping to pilot a new after school program this winter.

# Youth Leading Youth in the Yukon

In partnership with the Yukon Child Advocate Office (YCAO), Jays Care ran Rookie League across 8 different schools and communities across the Yukon territory. This being the program's inaugural year, the focus was all about supporting youth to build their self-esteem and enhance their self-confidence.

## What makes Yukon Rookie League unique?

Rookie League was successfully implemented across 8 different schools and communities and each program was almost entirely planned and led by youth! Jays Care and YCAO led a series of motivational and leadership based workshops designed to engage youth across the territory. The aim was to build a movement of youth leaders excited and energized to bring baseball to life in their local communities. These youth received specialized Jays Care training to become Youth Coaches and learned how to plan and run Rookie League in their own schools and communities. Research shows that youth respond best to programs that they can design and lead themselves, in environments where they have agency and voice. This year's Rookie League program is proof of this with 85% of youth coaches reporting that, they learned they have a voice and now believe they are leaders in their community.



**Students are leading the way, coaching other kids and engaging other kids who don't otherwise play sports. We're using the vehicle of baseball to make that happen.**

**- Annette King, Yukon Advocate for Children**



# The Results

8

**schools across the Yukon Territory participated in Rookie League.**

45

**youth were selected and trained as youth coaches.**

122

**children participated on Rookie League teams practicing each week.**

80%

**of participants were Indigenous (compared to 30% in the general population).**

1

**baseball diamond in Kwanlin Dun First Nation was awarded a Jays Care Field Of Dreams grant enabling them to upgrade their playing surface.**

4

**youth traveled to Toronto to participate in the first ever dirt exchange presenting dirt from baseball diamonds across the Yukon to be spread on Rogers Centre mound as part of National Indigenous People's Day celebrations.**

10%

**increase in registration this year in Softball Yukon programs allowing for 2 new teams to be made. Many of these new players were inspired to sign up through the Rookie League program.**





