



CPRA ACPL

GENDER EQUITY IN RECREATIONAL SPORT

Success Story

Sledge Hockey Players Score Virtual Camp Experience

FOR 13 YEAR-OLD AUBREE CLEMENTS and eight year-old Brynleigh Yewsuk, playing sledge hockey with other girls has its challenges.

Aubree, who lives in Bowmanville, Ontario, has juvenile arthritis and hip problems which started when she was three years-old. She has to travel at least 45 minutes to practice, and up to three hours for regular season games to play — sometimes traveling to Ottawa and back in one day.

Brynleigh, who lives in Melville, Saskatchewan, has a brain injury which affects her balance. She's played sledge hockey for two years, and travels up to two hours for games. They both play for a co-ed, all-ages team.

Now during the COVID-19 pandemic, they can't participate at all.



Canada

This project has been made possible by the Government of Canada.



Aubree Clements, Age 12, Bowmanville, Ontario



Brynleigh Yewsuk, Age 8, Melville, Saskatchewan

“Providing access to gender-specific parasport programming for girls and women+ with disabilities was the main barrier that we were trying to overcome.”

Janice Coulter, President of Women’s Para Hockey of Canada

But thanks to funding from the CPRA’s Gender Equity in Recreational Sport program, which is funded by the Government of Canada (Sport Canada), they had the chance to play again.

From February 5-7, 2021, Aubree and Brynleigh joined more than 50 other Canadian girls and women+ (including transgender girls and women) to play their favourite sport and learn new skills at the Para Hockey at Home Grassroots Virtual Camp. Hosted by Women’s Para Hockey of Canada, the camp welcomed girls and women+ of all ages and abilities from across Canada. Participants attended from nine provinces and territories, and ranged in age and skill. The youngest participant was just six years- old, and the oldest was 63.

“She had a blast,” said Diana Moriarity, Aubree’s mother. “Having a way to be active is good for her mental and physical health.”

Janice Coulter, president of Women’s Para Hockey of Canada, said that the project kept girls and women+ engaged in sport and connected to the community.

“Providing access to gender-specific parasport programming for girls and women+ with disabilities was the main barrier that we were trying to overcome,” Janice explained.

As part of the camp, players received a Para Hockey at Home kit that included all of the materials needed to

participate. They were divided into groups, and Canadian high-performance players led their sessions over Zoom. Bilingual high-performance players were also available to translate the sessions for francophone participants, ensuring that the program was accessible to both English and French-speaking participants.

“These women are role models and mentors in our community, and are dedicated to helping the next generation,” said Janice.

Marcy Yewsuk, Brynleigh’s mother, said the camp was an excellent opportunity for her daughter to learn more about the game and connect with other players.

“I really hope that there is an opportunity to do this again. She got way more out of this weekend than I ever expected,” said Marcy. “It was phenomenal, and an amazing virtual experience beyond our expectations.”

Diana said the experience also made an impact on her daughter. Someday, Aubree hopes to make the Canadian women’s team.

“As a mom, I am really hoping (as is she) that by that time, women’s sledge hockey will be a paralympic sport, as it should be . . . especially considering the fact that men’s sledge hockey is,” Diana said. “I was shocked to find out that the women’s division is not. There should be equality in sports for all genders.” 🍁