

# GIRLS AT BAT PROGRAM REPORT 2018



# Program Map

Here is where Girls At Bat took place this summer:

- o Fort McMurray, Alberta
- o Fort Mackay First Nation, Alberta
- o Edmonton, Alberta
- o Calgary, Alberta
- o Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- o Brampton, Ontario
- o Milton, Ontario
- o Acton, Ontario
- o Scarborough, Ontario
- o Midland, Ontario
- o Cornwall, Ontario
- o Truro, Nova Scotia
- o Eel Ground First Nation, New Brunswick
- o Metepenagiag First Nation, New Brunswick
- o Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island



## Implementing Partnerships

**Plan International Canada**

(Funding and Implementing Partner)

**Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta**

**Canadian Native Friendship Centre**

**Calgary Immigrant Women's Association**

**Boys and Girls Club of Pleasant Hill, SK**

**Girls Inc. of Halton**

**West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre**

**Brampton Girls Softball Association**

**Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre**

(Boys and Girls Club)

**Boys and Girls Club of North Simcoe**

**Boys and Girls Club of Cornwall/SDG**

**Municipality of Colchester Recreation Services**

**Metepenagiag School**

**Natoaganeg School**

**Women's Network PEI**

# Program Overview

Girls At Bat (GAB) is a baseball for development initiative designed to help girls across the country set lofty goals and pursue them with tenacity. Jays Care Foundation and Plan International Canada have partnered to work with communities and organizations to help increase female participation and retention in sport and active programming, and, ultimately, instill confidence and a sense of empowerment.

In 2017, GAB took place in 6 communities in Ontario and Saskatchewan. In 2018, the program expanded to 15 communities, including Alberta and the Maritimes. Two-day dynamic workshops were hosted for staff and volunteers from organizations leading GAB in Edmonton, Moncton and Toronto. Following the workshops, newly trained coaches returned home to launch their GAB programs for 8-12 weeks and posted their programs on a closed GAB Facebook group. This also established a sense of community that was supported through encouragement on social media throughout the season.



## Program GOALS

1

To equip coaches with the necessary training and tools to feel confident and comfortable running Girls At Bat programming and adapting sessions to best fit the needs of their participants

2

To establish strong, positive connections amongst participants

3

To provide safe environments for participants to find the courage to step out of their comfort zones and try something new

4

To encourage girls to stay active beyond attending Girls At Bat

# Why the program is unique

Girls At Bat takes a sport for development approach, which focuses on establishing the four main pillars of the program:

- 1) Connection amongst teammates and coach role models;**
- 2) Courage within each athlete to try something new;**
- 3) Leadership; and,**
- 4) Love of sport**

The program does not have a fixed implementation strategy; rather, Girls At Bat focuses on recruiting and retaining girls through innovative approaches that are appropriate for specific communities and organizations.



**14**  
**ORGANIZATIONS**  
**IMPLEMENTING**  
**GIRLS**  
**AT BAT**



**60**  
**TRAINED**  
**COACHES**

**717**  
**GIRLS**  
**AT BAT**  
**PARTICIPANTS**



# Girls At Bat Coach Trainings

Together, Jays Care Foundation and Plan International Canada offered three trainings in different locations (Edmonton, Moncton and Toronto) to reach 60 enthusiastic coaches and program coordinators across the country. Trainings were designed to equip all coaches with the tools, knowledge and confidence to run exceptionally fun and inclusive programming that fit the needs of their youth and the goals of Girls At Bat. Hosting regional trainings helped to facilitate a sense of community and network amongst coaches and various organizations, which was most apparent in the active online sharing and communication, particularly between partners in Alberta and the Maritimes. This sense of cohesiveness was an important part of the ongoing support offered throughout the summer, as it allowed more remote communities to not only stay connected, but also to draw from the excitement and inspiration of others.

**97% of training participants reported building positive relationships with others at the workshop**

**100% of training participants agreed they learnt new and effective way to increase participation of girls in their program**



**“Definitely worth the 2 day investment. I learned a lot to take from this course.”**  
– Girls At Bat coach

**“This clinic provides valuable information to assist in getting girls more involved in sports.”**  
– Girls At Bat coach

**“It is the most information-packed training I’ve seen!”**  
– Girls At Bat coach

# How do we know its working?

Through a series of surveys and interviews, we learnt about some of the outcomes the program is achieving:

Connection	Courage	Leadership	Love of Sport
<b>92% of participants agreed that Girls at Bat made them feel like they were part of a team</b>	<b>92% of participants reported that they tried new things that made them feel proud at Girls at Bat</b>	<b>95% of parents noticed their child displayed more confidence throughout the summer</b>	<b>90% of participants said they felt excited to join more sports teams and activities by the end of the program</b>
<p>“This is very impactful and young girls need to see we are working together to help them.”</p> <p>- Girls at Bat coach</p>	<p>“[My favourite part of Girls at Bat was] playing different games and trying new things”</p> <p>- Girls at Bat participant</p>	<p>“[At Girls at Bat I discovered my strengths are] leadership, teamwork, and playing sports.”</p> <p>- Girls at Bat participant</p>	<p>“Thank you so much for teaching me how to play”</p> <p>- Girls at Bat participant</p>



**WHAT AN  
AWESOME  
CONFIDENCE  
-BUILDING  
INSPIRING  
ENVIRONMENT**

- GIRLS AT BAT PARENT

## Girls Inc.

of Halton, Milton and Acton Ontario

As a strategic partner in 2018, Girls Inc. of Halton set out to provide opportunities for as many girls as possible. Their passion and drive led them to not only incorporate Girls At Bat within existing summer camp programs, but also to successfully deliver the first ever Girls At Bat league.

The league is small but mighty. Fifty-two girls made up four separate teams; and, for 8 weeks, they had the opportunity to practice and play a baseball game each week. This league was designed to instill a love for sport in a fun and inclusive environment. As one parent described, Girls At Bat gave “my child a chance to learn and love baseball; she wouldn’t have wanted to enroll otherwise.” The strong bonds between players could be felt as they cheered for each other while they sat on the bench – often needing to be reminded when it was their turn to bat because they were so involved in the cheer. As one coach remarked, girls often “came in not knowing anyone but by the end, they were all supporting each other.”



## SHENOAH CROCKETT

- Girls Inc. Northern Alberta

In Fort McMurray, four and a half hours north of Edmonton, you will find Shenoah, a Girls At Bat coach with a love of baseball and a passion for using it as a tool to change the lives of girls in her community.

The busy mom of three dedicated her entire summer to empowering girls through the Girls At Bat program, and single-handedly spearheaded seven different programs, including a four-week summer camp for girls in two separate age groups. Her unstoppable drive and enthusiasm resulted in her encouraging over 107 girls to step up to the plate, many for the first time ever.

Shenoah runs the Girls At Bat program through Girls Inc. of Northern Alberta, a Jays Care partner and non-profit organization focused on girls-only programming. "The goal is to just get the girls out there and trying new things," she said of what she wanted to achieve. "I love watching the girls learn new things, meet new friends, and connect."

Having previously worked as an educational assistant, Shenoah was looking for a change and joined the Girls Inc. family in February. Now, she works in Fort McMurray and mentors girls outside of the classroom. Through her work in First Nation schools, Shenoah knew a group of girls who would love baseball, so she extended her reach by taking the program north, to Fort McKay, driving an hour each way to deliver baseball to the First Nation community.

"[The program] means that I get to make a difference, and be there, because not everybody has that person," she said. "Seeing new girls who had never played surprise themselves with their abilities was amazing," she said. "It's great giving them the confidence to try new things, even if it's not baseball they can say, 'At least I tried something new.'"



# Special Events

## Girls At Bat All-Star Game and Culminating Celebration

On August 19th, the Van Boekel family generously hosted the first annual Girls At Bat All-Star game on their farm located in Bright, Ontario. On this restructured field based on the iconic Field of Dreams film, 34 girls from the Greater Toronto Area were selected to take part in an all-star game to recognize their leadership, dedication and courage demonstrated throughout their time in the Girls At Bat program. Over 60 community members came out to support the girls. Friends and family not only cheered the girls on, but also took part in the medal ceremony at the end of the day.

**89% of athletes agreed that the All-Star game made them feel like part of a team**



**“It was a great day for girls to show their strength.”**

**- All-Star Game participant**

**“It is an amazing program. You get to meet new people, make new friends, and have fun playing baseball.”**

**- All-Star Game participant**

**“It was very well organized and definitely got people to come.”**

**- All-Star Game attendee**

# Key Learnings and Recommendations for 2019

Overall, the 2018 Girls At Bat program was a major success! In its first year of regional expansion, the program demonstrated many wins, growing exponentially from 123 participants in 2017, to 717 female youth in GAB this year. While the program was deemed a huge success, there are still many areas in which we can improve. Below are some of the key recommendations that came from coach, participant and parent feedback:

1

## **Implement strategies for returning organizations/communities to expand their reach and further develop their program.**

A three-tiered system will be introduced as the Girls At Bat program structure moves forward. As programs further expand and grow, they can choose to strive for the next level.

**Level 1:** 'Stepping up to the plate,' is designed for partners who want to run practice-style sessions and focus on introducing the basics of baseball.

**Level 2:** 'Getting in the game,' goes beyond practice and baseball basics to form a league-style program with a minimum of one practice and one game per week.

**Level 3:** 'Hitting it out of the park,' provides a number of opportunities for fully established leagues who wish to gain enhanced training and support to help infuse a Girls At Bat approach into their day-to-day operations.

2

## **Integrate more big events that bring girls from different communities together.**

As regional programs continue to grow, we plan to host 2-3 large events that will serve to launch their new season and/or to celebrate participants. Particularly, both the Maritimes and Alberta will be selected regions to host these events, linking different organizations and/or communities. Program events will help to enhance further connections between participants and coaches.

3

## **Incorporate more leadership development opportunities for older age groups.**

As part of the new three-tier system, various leadership opportunities will be available and tailored to participants' level of comfort and expertise. Further leadership opportunities will also be offered during big events to encourage participants to lead different activities and have a voice in the planning process.

4

## **Greater family involvement in the program.**

Family involvement, especially parental support, was a major facilitator for this year's program success. Creating opportunities for more families to be involved also helps to enhance intergenerational connections throughout the communities. Volunteer roles will be created and clearly defined prior to the start of the season, providing families with the opportunity to sign up and support the program in a variety of ways. Parents and families will also be incorporated in program activities and events, such as culminating celebrations and seasonal practices and games.