

Youth Pickleball Initiatives Report - Working Group - Heather Hood, PBC Director At Large; Matthew Landells, Head Sponsored Junior Player, Pitt Meadows; Evelyn LeRose, Vernon PB Club; October 25, 2020

Over the past many months, our Working Group has been communicating with Pickleball Clubs in the province to research what we are doing to support the development of Youth Pickleball in B.C.

Highlights of the Summer Inquiry

In response to, what's working and what's not working in the development of BC's Youth Pickleball. Covid19 continues to present challenges for many Pickleball communities' ability to move forward with plans. Schools have also focused their priorities on school opening and operating this fall. Clubs were very clear that they were supportive of developing youth pB; their first priority, however, is getting adequate dedicated courts for the growing numbers of new players and existing players.

What's happening in the province of BC to support the growth and development of Youth Pickleball (School-Aged Youth) U 20?

Contacted total of 74 Clubs listed on the Pickleball BC list with a set of inquiry questions to determine what progress is underway to engage youth.

In reviewing what clubs had to offer there were some common themes expressed as well as common barriers to youth development summarized as follows:

% of Youth Players in Clubs

- Most clubs had fewer than 5% of their membership U20. One club (Peace Country) noted that youth participation is 18% of membership and had a good relationship and partnership with the school district.
- Very few clubs had a person dedicated solely to development of Youth Programs; whereas, some club directors included Youth development under the umbrella of player development.
- The few participating youth were typically introduced to pB by an older family member e.g. grandparent, parent.

Pickleball in Schools

There are a number of schools throughout Canada who include Pickleball in their elementary to secondary physical education programs. School Curriculum is developed provincially, and most physical education curriculum objectives provide

enough flexibility to include the sport of Pickleball in these programs. Ontario, however, developed its own Pickleball Curriculum in 2011. (Note: E.LeRose completed an overview of the Pickleball curriculum for schools in Canada).

The survey of BC clubs showed there were several different Youth models of implementation underway in various pockets of the province. These included: Teach the Teacher Training; Professional Development for Teachers; as well as a program where a club offered a Junior Pickleball Training Program. In some cases, trainers were volunteers and others paid trainers; and sometimes Clubs provided the equipment and the volunteers to go into schools to work with the teacher and students.

Youth Programs

A few clubs (Vernon) with dedicated courts offer Junior Programs and Youth Camps; this includes free Junior Orientations. Chilliwack Club is in the process of developing a Junior Program in partnership with the school district with the club providing all equipment - balls, paddles, nets, safety eyewear. Some clubs assisting schools with free or paid lessons. Other clubs (Kelowna) have focused on training members in becoming PB Teachers.

Exploration and Successes cited include:

Exploring summer youth camps
Evening and weekend hours set aside for students and working adults.
Grant writing for lessons targeting At Risk Youth and special needs (Sooke)
Seniors (Saturna's Grandparents) teaching youth the rudiments of the sport.

BC School Curriculum

The PE K-12 learning outcomes provide a broad description of physical education areas that allows teachers to determine how they will teach movement and manipulative skills and this can be done within the sport of PB. Equipment and courts can be adapted using badminton nets or portable pB nets, and courts. Schools would need to get paddles and balls. Fraser Valley Club and other clubs have partnered with schools to provide equipment and free intro lessons to teachers' classes. Some schools already have wooden paddles and Pickleball Jr. Sets.

Barriers cited include: limited number of dedicated courts; difficult to accommodate court usage for existing player lists in the fast growing sport; primarily focused on new players coming to the sport rather than initiating or attracting youth. Another barrier noted by several clubs was the perception or public image that Pickleball is a sport for seniors only.

In summary, there doesn't appear to be any areas of opposition to the development of youth participation in Pickleball. There are, however, few noted incentives to take on the challenge. Those Pickleball Clubs with access to dedicated courts are clearly moving ahead in BC youth development. The question next, Where do we go from here? The working group proposes for Future Directions of Youth Programs 2021 the following goals for consideration.

Proposed Goals:

- *To support the increase of BC School-aged Youth players in the sport of Pickleball
- *To adopt and adapt several working models of School-aged Youth Pickleball Programs
- *To plan, market, and implement a future BC Junior Tournament