



SUPPORTING PARTNER



STICKS & STONES BURSARY PROJECT

Impact Summaries

2025–2026 Recipient Reports

These summaries consolidate the post-program reports submitted by the four 2025–2026 Sticks & Stones Bursary recipients.

North Grenville Curling Club – Queer Curling: Fun For All

Intended group

2SLGBTQI+ / Rainbow community

The project

North Grenville Curling Club partnered with North Grenville Pride, Smiths Falls Pride, Carleton Place Pride and Queer Connection Lanark to launch “Queer Curling – Fun For All.” The pilot provided five free two-hour curling sessions on Sunday evenings during February and March 2026. The program was specifically designed as a welcoming environment for members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, with the sessions hosted and operated by 2SLGBTQIA+ curlers.

How the bursary was used

The \$1,500 bursary enabled NGCC to offer the five-session program free of charge, helping remove financial barriers to participation. Accessibility support included double grippers and an introduction to stick curling for participants who were new to the sport or concerned about falling.

Who benefited

- 42 participants, ranging in age from 11 to 69.
- 100% identified as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

- Many participants were new to curling.
- Approximately 15% had visible disabilities, including participants using walkers or canes and individuals with sight or hearing loss.
- Multiple participants identified as neurodiverse, with accommodation needs invited at the beginning of each session.

Impact

The program exceeded expectations and demonstrated clear demand for dedicated Rainbow curling programming. 78% of respondents said they would return and would like to participate in a weekly Rainbow curling program. NGCC is now working toward creating a permanent Queer Curling league. The program also generated a new connection with the local Muslim community after a participant approached the club about a possible Muslim women's league.

Participant testimonials

"I had such a good time. I haven't played a sport in a long time, and I think this is great!"

"I wish I could do this all the time. I feel safe here with other folks I know from the (2SLGBTQIA+) community"

"I feel I can be myself here – thank you"

"I haven't curled in 40 years. I can see myself doing this on a regular basis. I had no idea stick curling existed and I like curling with my partner. We will be back!"

Ottawa Curling Club / Rainbow Rockers – Learn to Curl for 2SLGBTQIA+ and New Canadian Communities

Intended group

2SLGBTQIA+ community, particularly newcomers to Canada

The project

The Ottawa Curling Club, working with its Rainbow Rockers Curling League, delivered an Intro to Curling / Learn to Curl event on April 10, 2026. The event focused heavily on newcomers, with the majority of the 30 participants coming from Capital Rainbow Refuge, an organization that helps queer people come to Canada to escape discrimination and persecution in their home countries. Many participants were new to Canada and had grown up in warmer climates, meaning that for some, this was their first experience on ice.

How the bursary was used

The funding supported the delivery of the Learn to Curl experience, including curling instruction, grippers and stabilizers for new participants, food and non-alcoholic beverages, volunteer instructor support, and a welcoming social experience before and after the on-ice session.

Who benefited

- 30 participants attended.
- The majority were members of Capital Rainbow Refuge.
- Participants included 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers to Canada.
- For some participants, the event was their first experience on ice.
- 12 volunteer instructors supported the event.

Impact

The event created an immediate pathway toward continued participation. Following the event, there was interest in forming as many as two and a half five-person teams, suggesting that participants were considering becoming involved in the sport beyond the introductory event. The organizers also reported that volunteers thoroughly enjoyed the experience, with several asking to be signed up for future sessions.

Testimonials

“What really warmed my heart was seeing everyone having so much fun. The participants were laughing, encouraging each other and even dancing!” — Kevin Martin, Rainbow Rockers

“The Newcomer Learn to Curl was a tremendous success. The club's volunteers were so dedicated and encouraging.” — Lisa Hébert, Sponsorship Director and Board Chair, Capital Rainbow Refuge

Paris Curling Club – Crossing All Bridges Curling Program

Intended group

Individuals with varying developmental and physical abilities

The project

Paris Curling Club partnered with Crossing All Bridges Learning Centre, a local organization providing community and support for individuals with varying developmental and physical abilities. The resulting Crossing All Bridges Curling Program provided 12 participants with six weeks of two-hour weekly sessions. Participants learned the basics of curling in a social, fun, encouraging and non-competitive environment.

The program was delivered by volunteers from the Paris Curling Club, including members of its Women's Day League.

How the bursary was used

- Adaptive equipment, including delivery sticks, stabilizers and grippers.
- Ice team fees.
- Hospitality costs.
- Ice preparation/program delivery costs.
- The adaptive equipment is reusable, meaning the bursary created an asset that can continue to support future participants rather than being a one-time expense.

Who benefited

- 12 individuals with varying developmental abilities.
- Many participants have limited opportunities to participate in sports and similar activities.
- Participants received adapted instruction and additional volunteer support so they could progress at their own pace.
- Participants also interacted with the broader curling club community before and after sessions through snacks, refreshments and watching regular league play.

Impact

The program built confidence, independence and a lasting relationship with the curling club. Participants became more confident navigating the facility, learned curling terminology and rules, became increasingly independent with equipment, improved their skills, and looked forward to attending each week.

By the end of the program, every participant expressed a desire to return. Paris CC plans to offer two sessions during the next curling season, each lasting six to eight weeks.

Participant testimonials

"You can have fun with other people, make new friends, believe in yourself, and have confidence." — Brooke

"That it is a lot of fun. I get to try new things, can hang out with family and friends, and have a good time on the ice." — Frankie

"It makes me feel calm, happy, and excited!" — Amy

"Like I achieved something, and gained a sport." — Laura

“I like curling, it's my favourite sport!” — Samantha

High Park Club – Indigenous Children and Youth Curling Program

Intended group

Indigenous children and youth

The project

High Park Club delivered an Indigenous Children and Youth Curling Program designed to increase access to curling through inclusive, culturally respectful introductory experiences that support skill development, confidence and leadership. The program is grounded in the principles of Truth and Reconciliation and integrates those values into program delivery and the broader culture of the Club.

The program was delivered in partnership with Indigenous community organizations, including Native Child and Family Services Toronto's Mount Dennis Hub, and with the Toronto District School Board's Kapapamhchak Wandering Spirits School. The partnerships supported outreach, participant engagement and a culturally safe, welcoming environment.

How the bursary was used

The program removed financial and logistical barriers by providing equipment, transportation support and meals at no cost to participants. Equipment, including helmets, was provided for the Learn-to-Curl sessions. The program also relied on strong volunteer support from High Park Club members.

Who benefited

- Approximately 20 children and youth participated across two 2025–2026 Learn-to-Curl clinics.
- Participants came through the Mount Dennis Hub, with children and youth introduced to curling in a half-day format.
- Many participants were experiencing curling for the first time.
- The sessions also involved community staff, family members and High Park Club volunteers.

Impact

The program provided positive first experiences in curling while supporting confidence, communication, teamwork and skill development. Several children returned for a second

session, including one participant whose parent brought them back on a day off because of their eagerness to participate again.

High Park Club is now exploring longer-term pathways for participants into its Little Rocks and Junior programs, including sponsorship of Indigenous children and youth. The Club is also fundraising for a fee bursary to help cover future Little Rocks and Junior fees and remove financial barriers to continued participation.

The program has also strengthened community partnerships. The Native Canadian Centre of Toronto and the Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre have expressed interest in organizing field trips to High Park Club during the 2026–2027 season, while approval processes are now complete to allow renewed participation from Kapapamhchak Wandering Spirits School.

Additional impact

The program generated strong internal engagement at High Park Club. Two fundraising events raised \$6,279.58, and the number of club members volunteering to support the program increased. The Club also shared updates through its newsletter, helping build awareness and support within the membership.

Overall Sticks & Stones Impact Themes

Across the four recipient reports, the bursary supported clubs in opening their doors to people who have traditionally faced barriers to participating in curling. While each program served a different community and used a different approach, common themes included reducing financial and logistical barriers, creating welcoming first experiences, building community partnerships, and creating pathways for continued participation.

Club	Community reached	Key impact
North Grenville CC	2SLGBTQIA+ / Rainbow community	Created a safe place to try curling and generated demand for a permanent Rainbow league
Ottawa Curling Club	2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers to Canada	Introduced newcomers to curling and created interest in forming teams
Paris Curling Club	Individuals with developmental and physical abilities	Built confidence, independence and a lasting relationship with the curling club
High Park Curling Club	Indigenous children and youth	Created positive first experiences, strengthened community partnerships and developed pathways toward

		continued youth participation
--	--	----------------------------------