



Samantha Stokell/NNSL photos

A group of girls and women in Inuvik participated at World Girl's Hockey Day, which is celebrated around the world in Belgium, Sweden, Kazakhstan, Japan and even Ireland.

Girls in hockey celebrated

First year for girls' hockey team in Inuvik

by **Samantha Stokell**
Northern News Services

In a unifying moment, girls and women around the world played hockey on Oct. 2 to support the sport and give females an opportunity to try it out.

Inuvik participated in the International Ice Hockey Federation-organized event titled World Girl's Hockey Day on Sunday. Twenty-one countries held events to introduce girls and women to the basic skills of hockey, learn about where hockey is available and have a chance to fall in love with a new sport.

"Women's hockey is getting bigger and bigger and the more support we can get, the better," said Amanda Lowe, coach for the new girls' team in Inuvik. "(World Girl's Hockey Day) lets girls know who is involved and see how much fun it is. It gives them a chance."

At least 24 women and girls participated in the Inuvik event, ranging in ages and skill levels. The coaches – Lowe, Carole Charlton and Nadine Wagner – signed up 10 new girls from the event to the team that is newly formed this year.

Hockey NWT ran a female development hockey program with camps in all regions of the territory. With the assistance of the minor hockey organization in Inuvik, the three coaches decided to set aside a time each week for girls to play hockey with each other, as well as on the minor hockey teams.

Charlton coached peewee hockey last season and noticed a significant change in the girls on her team when they participated in the female development hockey programs.

"It was really obvious that the girls on the peewee team played differently, played more

confidently without the boys," she said. "In the last couple of years, there's been a growing number of girls wanting to play and we wanted to capitalize on that."

Darcie Setzer, 12, has played hockey since she was five. She started out figure skating but then switched over to hockey.

"It's just fun, the whole game. I like that in peewee you can check," Setzer said. "I like that in peewee there's girls like me. We've played with the boys forever and it's good to play with people better than me."

Coaching inspiration

An important aspect of the girls team was to have all female coaches giving the young women role models in the sport.

"It inspires girls to participate and shows that they can play on different levels," Charlton said. "It's much easier for

someone in any regard to see someone they identify with in a place they want to be. It's just easier to do."

The girls team and World Girl's Hockey Day provided an opportunity for girls who already play hockey to have a place where they can communicate more comfortably with the coaches and try new things in the sport. It also allowed girls who haven't played before, a chance to put on "boy skates."

"It's good because some people who are less skilled can come out and have a chance," Setzer said. "Lots of boys are really into hockey, so this is good maybe for people who are just getting started."

The girls-only team is open to girls up to the age of 17 and all skill levels. There is some equipment available, if needed. The team practices are on Sundays from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. For more information, contact Carole Charlton.



Coach Carole Charlton helps first-time hockey player Taylor Rinas put on her equipment during World Girl's Hockey day in Inuvik on Oct. 2.

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KRISTEN HARDER

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AGE: 10 GRADE: 5

Kristen's favourite sport is figure skating because she likes doing lots of fun stuff such as spins and jumps or spins and jumps together. Kristen has figure skated ever since she moved to Inuvik two years ago. She wants to learn how to move to a higher level because in her current level, her class does one-foot spins and plays games that help with speed. She wants to continue figure skating for at least another 10 years. Kristen also enjoys soccer and swimming.

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