The Resilient Group that is Team 2020

(Back row from right to left: Brady Hughes, Joel Johnston, Ben MacGregor, Haley Hocken, Gillian Kabarchuk, Morgan Weir, Shilah Anderton, Mary Ann Rintoul
Front row from right to left: Taylor Sinclair, Marta Misiewicz, Carlos Jimenez, Chelsea Woo, Nicole Bonnell, Derek Ip, Samantha Graham, Emily Macdonald, Maria Buchko)

This year the Play Around the World team experience was cut short by COVID-19. PAW Team 2020 emerged as a strong and talented team over the winter term with preparations, learning and practice. Unfortunately, just as we approached the last few weeks of the term online, the reality of the rapidly escalating virus, worldwide travel restrictions and our commitment to prioritizing student health and safety, led to cancelled summer play programming in all 19 communities and organizations in four different countries (Thailand, Cambodia, Peru, and NWT Canada). The NWT team was scheduled to drive North on May 2\textsuperscript{nd}, the Peru team was to fly May 3\textsuperscript{rd} and the two Asia teams on May 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2020. Sadly, there were no departures for Team 2020.
There is so much to say about this extraordinary Team. They were a strong, cohesive team who came together quickly (mind and spirit) and enthusiastically anticipated their in-country service-learning experience. The team offered strengths in the areas of adapted physical activity and intercultural competence as well as organizational and teamwork skills. The course meetings confirmed how the learning would contribute not only applying knowledge to practice, but also enhance the play-focused synergies with the many partners we collaborate with worldwide. In light of the pandemic and cancelled travel, there have been heartfelt well wishes sent back and forth between us and our four country partners far and wide, including schoolteachers, principals, orphanage directors, community influencers, language instructors, landlords, recreation directors, and tuk tuk drivers to name a few. Needless to say, the PAW students and leaders were extremely disappointed that COVID-19 highjacked their in-country experience, but they are understanding and resilient. Immediately they began to plan and adapt to the uncertain climate with decisions to find other spring practicum options, alter their expectations or even defer their PAW journey to 2021. Team 2020 is a talented, competent, creative and compassionate bunch, ready for their next adventure. Big thanks to each one of this year’s team and outstanding leaders for fully immersing themselves in the winter term course and mission to provide, protect and promote every child’s right to play. I know they will continue to contribute as global citizens, wherever life leads them.

- Mary Ann Rintoul, Director
Grand Prairie Play Day

Play Around the World has been working with Alumni Relations to provide play opportunities for Alumni for a while now. Only those playdays have mostly taken place on campus. This year we were asked by Alumni Relations if we would be willing to send some of the team to locations outside of Edmonton. We were more than excited to make this happen. I was lucky enough to go to Grande Prairie with Haley, one of this year’s students from Team Fort Providence.

The playday in Grande Prairie turned out great. Though there was a little apprehension (from the parents/staff) about free play with so many loose parts, the children quickly showed them that with so many different materials the imagination can run wild. We saw castles being built, obstacle courses being put up and races of all different kinds taking place. I think the biggest surprise came from what a simple box can become. To one it's a hat to another a box car. I would say that it was a huge success and we look forward to doing it again next year.

- Joel Johnston, Current PMC Member, Team 2016, Leader 2017
Alumni Relations holds an event every year in Grande Prairie, the purpose of our events is to connect the alumni community with each other, promote University of Alberta programs and gain support and awareness for them and, ideally, highlight the work of alumni in the communities. Most of our alumni in Grande Prairie have families so in the last couple years we have featured a program that works with children so we can create an event the whole family can attend. On March 8, Alumni Relations brought two PAW play leaders and all their play equipment to Grande Prairie. It was a very fun day for the 85 alumni and families that came out. We had the help of alumni volunteers Melissa Gajewski and Jim Hammond and play leader Joel’s family, who live in Grande Prairie.

Jim Hammond also provided the whole group lunch from his business, Mucho Burrito. Our hope is alumni in that community will be talking about Play Around the World and its mandate and support it in the future!

- Jennifer Jenkins, Regional Chapters Coordinator Canada/USA, Office of Alumni Relations, U of A
Updates from Thailand During COVID-19: Hand to Hand

Hand to Hand Foundation is an organization based in Pattaya, Thailand that provides services for marginalized people. They work closely with government departments to provide services such as pre-school, kids club, prison ministry and hospital ministry to name a few. Below are some excerpts from Hand to Hand’s latest newsletter about the current state of the foundation and Pattaya during COVID-19.

“In accordance with the Government regulations of Covid 19 most of our normal ministries are closed. We are taking care of our usual slum families and we visit them each week ensuring they have adequate food, medicine and supplies. These communities have banded together and are providing great support to each other.”

“The wearing of masks is compulsory in Pattaya, however these are hard to come by and expensive to purchase. Without a mask, lining up for free food and accessing any help available is very difficult. Hand to Hand is currently employing 12 people who are making masks out of fabric and given for free to those who need them. They also receive soap so they can wash the germs away. We have given out almost 3,000 masks and still making more.”

“We have been blessed by the many sponsors… who gave generously just before the Covid 19 outbreak occurred. The funds were dedicated for several construction projects including a new toilet at Hand to Hand Pre school, a block of toilets at the Baan Ruang Muang Maprung housing estate (our new housing estate) [and] new artificial grass making our playground safer and nicer. Gone are the old concrete slabs, tripping hazards and things to bump into.”

“The return date for students to return to school in Pattaya is still very unclear. A suggestion of on line learning was proposed however due to the large number of students with no access to a computer or internet this was not feasible. As soon as things return to normal we will be [providing an update].”
Kids Create Play Day
By: Nicole Bonnell, Team 2020

Below Nicole Bonnell (Team 2020) reflects on her first playday experience at Kids Create, an event put on by the U of A Alumni Association:

As members of the PAW 2020 team, we were able to focus even more on play within our own city than we expected! One of our first big playday experiences was at Enterprise Square. We had various activities planned for this playday and were able to set them up as "play zones"- which allowed for a lot of creativity. While sticking to a general theme of "around the world", we included creation in each one of our zones. One zone was full of paper and crafting supplies with a slime station, another was building and creating with cardboard boxes, and the third was loose parts play with all sorts of circus-related objects. This encouraged the kids to be creative by not having to follow the lead of their parents or other adults. We loved seeing kids that didn't want to leave our play zones come back soon after going to another station just so they could be creative with our team again.

As a team, we were able to experience all kinds of play all at once, and how the borders that we as play leaders sometimes put onto different types of play can all be destroyed and merged together by children. They really are the leaders when it comes to play, and their real drive is pure entertainment and enjoyment with no hidden agendas.

Before the playday, we got so excited with our own vision of what things would look like as we got set up, and it was fulfilled. But as the time went on, the borders between the zones became less and less distinguished and there was slime on the art projects, colouring supplies all over the boxes, and loose parts mixed with the forts, cars, and spaceships that were being built. It was amazing to see how easily the group of kids at the playday began to make the space their own. We watched as parents helped their children both by giving them ideas of what to do or helping them feel comfortable in the space and then backing away to give their children the opportunity to lead their own play.
Royle Harris sat on the senate for the University of Alberta, he worked for CBC as a staging and design person for 23 years, and he also happens to be one of PAW’s longest and most dedicated supporters. He has shown his support since 2001 when the program began. Mr. Harris sits on the PAW advisory committee, initiated and funds the Royle Harris Play Around the World Award for students, and supports the team at various fundraising events. To anyone that has met him, it is clear that Mr. Harris is a playful person who loves to tell stories, make jokes, and meet new people.

When asked what drew his interest to Play around the World, Mr. Harris spoke of his own personal trip to Thailand in 1996. He described this experience as eye opening to a new way of life and likely helped to spark an initial interest in the program when he read an article about Play Around the World in the Gateway News. From his curiosity, he was then introduced to Jane Valentyne (the founder of PAW). They had a conversation about the program and it was after this moment that Mr. Harris decided to get involved. In fact, he attended the convocation of the first PAW team and has been going ever since. “You guys work so hard to achieve your goals. It is the least I can do,” he said.

It is clear that PAW means a lot to Mr. Harris and when asked to try and describe what it means to him he said this: “Play Around the World is like a pebble in a pond. The ripples go every direction and not only help the kids in Thailand or wherever you go, but what it does for our own students is mind blowing.” “You get so much out of it. You get such a warm feeling from those kids… it affects your life.”
Royle was able to share countless stories that were passed onto him of PAW students doing great things. One such story was a time when a Thailand team took their kids to the ocean. “The glee and the happiness the kids got from that experience could just bring tears to your eyes; that story had a big effect on me.”

He then went on to speak about the students involved with PAW. Considering the demands put on students, Mr. Harris joked that PAW had the potential to be “hell on wheels”. However, he notes that somehow Play Around the World students always represent themselves and the university so well and without a problem. When asked why he think this is, he responded: “the students that are involved in PAW see the value in it; they are far more dedicated to the purpose”. “You would never imagine that these students could be so immersed in what they’re doing that it was the most important thing to them”. He also described how this passion and joy can rub off on so many people and how in comparison to other university programs, nothing matches to how Play around the world “does everything with sincerity”.

Finally, towards the end of the interview, we discussed how students benefit from PAW. “I hope they get a much bigger view of how the world works” he said. He describes how a student’s whole lifestyle has to change from what it previously was back home. “It has to be a big change for them and it changes very quickly”.

Mr. Harris also described his hope for students to gain the support and influence from all the great people involved with PAW. Just some of the people he mentioned included: Jane Valentyne, Mary Ann Rintoul, Colleen Mooney and Heather Crowe. “Everything these people have done has required so much dedication.” “They do it, because they want to do it. It’s not for some kind of award.”

While Mr. Harris used these words to describe other leaders who have helped to make PAW successful, the same could be described about him. His long lasting passion and support for Play Around the World does not go unnoticed and it is so very much appreciated.

Thank you Royle Harris!!
When the Playgrounds are Closed… Stay Active by Playing at Home!

Play for Strength:

1. **Hand to Hand Push Game**
   - Place your hands against your partner’s. Push against each other’s hands and try to make the other person take steps backwards.

2. **Glue Game**
   - Stick your partner to the wall, the couch, or the ground. While they have to try and stay glued on, you will try to pull or push them off.

3. **Magic Carpet Rides**
   - Place a bed sheet or blanket on the floor and take turns pulling and being pulled on the magic carpet.

4. **Rock and Bulldozer**
   - Take turns being the rock and the bulldozer. The rock gets down onto their hands and knees and the bulldozer tries to knock them over by pushing or pulling them at their waist or sides. The rock will try to stay where they are without getting knocked over.
Play for Balance:

1. **Lava Game**
   - Use couch cushions, pillows, and scrunched up to walk on and jump from. Don’t fall off because the ground is lava!

2. **Obstacle Courses**
   - Use whatever you have at home. Incorporate lots of obstacles to step over or crawl under. Place painter’s tape on the ground to make a balance beam to walk across.

3. **Mission Impossible Course**
   - Tape streamers, string or toilet paper across two walls (or just use tape for the entire course) to make “laser beams”. Do this along a path between two walls and vary the height and angles of each “laser beam”. Try to move across the path way without touching any of the “laser beams”.
CURRENT PAW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Program Management Committee (PMC):

Program Director – Mary Ann Rintoul
Finance Coordinator – Alexandra Kirincic
Fundraising Coordinator – Tracy Simon
Community Connections Coordinators –
Anna Knight & Zianna Esmail
Play Days Coordinator – Joel Johnston
Leadership Coordinator – Lauren Turner
Members-At-Large – Heather Crowe,
Samantha Goodwin, Kennedy Newton,
Kenadi Kuzyk, Jamie Cassie, Morgan Wier

2020 Leaders:

Brady Hughes – Cambodia
Morgan Weir – Peru
Shilah Anderton – Thailand
Joel Johnston – Northwest Territories

Advisory Committee:

Royle Harris
Colleen Mooney
Katrin Maximchuk
Tannis Davidson
Henry Yip
Dean Kerry Mummery
Christine Ma
Mary Ann Rintoul

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It’s Play Around the World’s 20th Anniversary!!

Keep an eye on our social media this summer for the PAW 20th Anniversary Series!