



Grand Prize Submission

# Chapleau Minor Hockey Association



Proudly Assisting Canadian Communities



# Grand Prize Submission

## Tell us about your hockey association.

In Chapleau, hockey is more than a sport: it is a pathway to belonging, confidence, and community. The Chapleau Minor Hockey Association exists to ensure that every child, regardless of background or circumstance, has the opportunity to experience the game of hockey. Our mission is to foster a love of the sport while teaching the skills, teamwork, and resilience that help young people succeed both on and off the ice. What makes our association truly special is the commitment behind it. Our executive and volunteers dedicate countless hours—often spending evenings and weekends at the arena: organizing teams, coordinating schedules, fundraising, and supporting players. Their passion and sacrifice are what make hockey possible for our youth in a small northern community. We believe that hockey should be accessible, welcoming, and community-driven. In a rural region like ours, sport plays a critical role in bringing young people together, building friendships, and creating positive opportunities. Our values are rooted in inclusion, sportsmanship, community, and growth, ensuring every child has a place to play while developing confidence, respect, and leadership. Through hockey, we are building more than players. We are building strong, resilient young people and a stronger community. Because in Chapleau, when a child gets the chance to play, the whole community shows up to make it happen.

## How would you describe your community?

Chapleau is a small, remote Northern Ontario community of approximately 2,000 residents, surrounded by vast wilderness and grounded in a powerful sense of pride, resilience, and connection. In a town like ours, community is not just a concept—it is how we support one another, celebrate together, and create meaningful opportunities for our youth. Families from Chapleau and surrounding rural areas come together through sport, school, and community events, building relationships that extend beyond the arena and into everyday life. Hockey plays a vital role in uniting our community, offering young people a shared space to connect, grow, and belong. However, living in a northern rural community comes with unique challenges. Long travel distances, limited access to resources, and the rising costs of organized sport can create significant barriers for families. Despite this, our community continues to rally around its youth. Dedicated volunteers, coaches, parents, and local organizations work together to ensure children have access to opportunities that support their physical, social, and emotional development. In Chapleau, hockey is more than a game—it is a gathering place, a source of pride, and a foundation for lifelong skills. It teaches teamwork, perseverance, and respect, while strengthening community bonds across generations. By investing in youth through sport, we are not only supporting individual growth but building a stronger, more connected future for our entire community.

## What role does hockey play in your community?

In Chapleau, hockey is more than a sport — it is the heartbeat of our community. During the long northern winters, our arena becomes a second home, where families gather, friendships are built, and young people find a sense of belonging. For many children in our rural community, hockey is a gateway to confidence, connection, and growth. It provides a place to be active, to be part of something bigger, and to learn life skills like teamwork, resilience, and leadership. On the ice, differences fade — what matters is showing up, supporting one another, and working together. Hockey also reflects the strength of our community. Volunteers, coaches, and families give countless hours to make the game possible, creating an environment where every child feels supported. The stands are filled with neighbours cheering not just for goals, but for effort, growth, and heart. This spirit was deeply felt this year when we lost a beloved U18 coach just days before the Emergency Services Game. Instead of cancelling, the team and community came together with his children and in Coach Thibault's honour, raised \$2,900 and collected over 500lbs of food for the local food bank. In a moment of loss, hockey became a way to give back, to support one another, and to carry forward his legacy. That is what hockey means in Chapleau. It is not just a game — it is where we come together, lift each other up, and build a stronger, more connected community.



# Grand Prize Submission

## What challenges exist in your community that keep kids from playing hockey?

While hockey is deeply valued in Chapleau, several barriers make it difficult for some children to participate. Cost remains one of the most significant challenges. Equipment, registration fees, and travel expenses add up quickly, placing a strain on families. In a small northern community where incomes can be limited, the cost of skates, protective gear, and team fees can make hockey financially out of reach, preventing some children from ever stepping onto the ice. These challenges are even greater for goaltenders, as specialized equipment and training significantly increase costs.

Geography is another major barrier. Chapleau is remote, and teams must travel several hours for games and tournaments. These long distances create additional expenses for transportation, fuel, and accommodations, making participation difficult and, at times, unsustainable for families.

Access to equipment and sporting resources is also limited. Without local sporting goods stores, families often struggle to find affordable or properly fitted gear. This can be especially challenging for new players and those interested in specialized positions like goaltending, where equipment is more expensive and less accessible. Social barriers also exist. With boys making up the majority of players, some girls may feel hesitant or intimidated to join. New players, particularly those starting at an older age, may also feel discouraged if they lack experience compared to their peers.

Finally, our programs rely heavily on volunteers. In a small community, recruiting and retaining coaches and organizers can be challenging, placing pressure on the sustainability of minor hockey.

Despite these barriers, our community remains committed to ensuring every child who wants to play hockey has the opportunity to do so.

## What is your hockey association currently doing to overcome these challenges?

The Chapleau Minor Hockey Association is committed to ensuring that as many children as possible can participate in hockey despite the barriers that exist in our community.

To address financial challenges, our association organizes ongoing fundraising initiatives, secures sponsorships, and relies on community support to help keep registration fees as affordable as possible. Our executive also works directly with families by offering flexible payment plans, ensuring that financial constraints do not prevent children from registering. In addition, we help coordinate travel by connecting families so players can share rides and accommodations, reducing the burden of long-distance tournament costs.

We also work closely with local partners and community members to source donated and gently used equipment. This helps ensure that children who want to try hockey are not turned away due to a lack of gear, including those interested in higher-cost positions such as goaltending.

To grow participation, we actively promote hockey through school connections, community outreach, and by fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment. We recognize the importance of encouraging girls and first-time players to join the sport and continue to take steps to make hockey feel accessible to everyone, regardless of experience. Our programs are made possible by a dedicated group of volunteers who give their time to coach, organize, and support our teams. In a small northern community, these individuals are the backbone of our association and play a critical role in sustaining minor hockey.

We also keep strong relationships with surrounding communities to ensure youth from across the region feel welcome and included.

While these efforts have allowed us to continue providing opportunities for local youth, added support will enable us to further reduce barriers and expand access to the game.



# Grand Prize Submission

**Please share the association's vision for using the \$75,000 Grand Prize to encourage more kids to play hockey by developing solutions that look to remove barriers in the game of hockey and make the game more accessible, inclusive and equitable for everyone?**

The Chapleau Minor Hockey Association's vision for the \$75,000 Grand Prize is to remove the key barriers preventing children in our remote Northern community from accessing hockey—cost, distance, confidence, and opportunity—through three coordinated, measurable programs.

Through the Access to Play Program, CMHA will eliminate financial and geographic barriers by providing equipment and travel support to at least 75 players annually beginning in the 2026–2027 season. Supporting 40+ players with travel and 50+ with equipment, the program will distribute 100% of funds annually, with the goal of increasing registration by 15% and improving retention among supported families by 10% by 2027–2028.

The Break the Ice: Confidence & Development Program will create inclusive entry points into hockey by engaging at least 60 participants annually. Through 20 girls-only sessions, two goalie camps, and weekly *First Shift* programming for 15+ new players, CMHA will reduce intimidation and increase participation among girls, goalies, and first-time players by 20%, with 50% transitioning into league play.

To ensure long-term sustainability, the Stronger Together: Leadership & Community Program will certify at least 5 coaches and will improve retention of volunteers by 15%. An annual Opening of Season Ceremony will engage 100+ members of the local community. Together, these initiatives create a complete pathway into hockey: removing barriers, building confidence, and fostering a stronger hockey community, ensuring every child in Chapleau has the opportunity to play, grow, and succeed: on and off the ice for years to come.



# Grand Prize Submission

## Kruger Big Assist Grand Prize Proposal

	Sep 2026- Feb 2027	Mar 2027- Aug 2027	Sep 2027-Feb 2028	\$
<b>Access to Play Program</b>				<b>\$56,000</b>
<b>Equipment Support Stream:</b> Purchase equipment inventory (gear, jerseys, bags)	10000	x	8000	18000
<b>Equipment Support Stream:</b> Distribute equipment to 50+ players	4000	x	4000	8000
<b>Travel Support Stream:</b> Provide travel support (gas cards & accommodations)	15000	x	15000	30000
<b>Break the Ice: Confidence &amp; Development Program</b>				<b>\$12,000</b>
<b>First Shift Stream:</b> Launch First Shift development (1) hour introductory weekly sessions	1000	x	1000	2000
<b>First Shift Stream:</b> Purchase starter equipment & supports for inexperienced players	2000	x	2000	4000
<b>Girls Development Stream:</b> Launch girls-only development weekly sessions	1000	x	1000	2000
<b>Goalie Development Stream:</b> Deliver Goalie Camps with specialized coaching for position specific training	2000	x	2000	4000
<b>Stronger Together: Leadership &amp; Community Program</b>				<b>\$7,000</b>
<b>Volunteer Development Stream:</b> Coach certification & training (courses, fees)	4000	x	x	4000
<b>Community Engagement Stream:</b> Plan & deliver Opening of Season Ceremony	1500	x	1500	3000
			<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>



Proudly Assisting Canadian Communities

