2018 Deadlines

PAW Application Deadline:
Deadline to apply for Play Around the World team 2019 is November 19, 2018.

Leadership:
Play Around the World (PAW) is seeking applications for 4 leadership positions for the 2019 teams, one for each of the 2 cities in Asia: Rayong Thailand, and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1 for Cusco Peru, and 1 for Northern Canada.

Leadership applications due October 15, 2018.
Upcoming Events

PAW Mini Open House
Thursday, September 13, 2018
10:00-2:00
Social Street, PAW Centre
Stop by our booth and learn more about the Play Around the World Program, and hear about past student experiences.

Go Abroad Fair
Wednesday, September 19, 2018
10:00-4:00
Dinwoodie Lounge, SUB,
PAW will have a booth at the Go Abroad fair to share information about and student experiences with going abroad to our four locations (Canada North, Peru, Thailand, and Cambodia).

Alumni Weekend Play Day
Saturday, September 22, 2018
11:00-4:00
Main Quad, University of Alberta
Join PAW Alumni in free play and some ‘games from around the world’.

University of Alberta Open House
Saturday, October 20, 2018
Butterdome, University of Alberta
PAW will join the KSR faculty to share information about the PAW program to prospective students at the University of Alberta.

PAW Team 2018 Public Presentation!

Play Around the World (PAW) invites you to a public presentation by the student team who travelled to Cambodia and Peru this past summer, 2018.
Wednesday, September 26, 2018
12:00 - 1:00
Van Vliet Complex, Room 3-205

Past PAW: where are they now?

Sarah McCrae- Team Phnom Penh, Cambodia 2014

When I consider the most impactful experiences of my life, my time in Cambodia as a Play Around the World participant is definitely among the top. Even though I was a PAW participant in
2014, this experience continues to impact the ways in which I think, act, process, and lead.

As I write this I am reminded of the 4H motto ‘Learn to Do by Doing’ and can’t help but smile, as this is what PAW was for me. I learned how to play again by playing.

Play. I believe it holds for many of us a connotation of being a childish. Of not growing up and in this, not reaching maturity. For myself, I held a negative attitude towards play because it wasn’t productive. I didn’t have time for it. Because of this, I often found myself letting go of this space to enter into play. I wanted to be ‘responsible and mature’ and prove I could make it as an adult in this world. Play had no place in this.

I was wrong. We need play. All of us. Throughout PAW and in these years since I have felt a rekindled spark of joy that continues to grow through play. Fuelled by curiosity and a childlike wonder I have been learning that when we choose to see the world where moments of play can be had, life can be so much richer.

Because play is more.
Play is more than an activity. It is more than paint and glitter.
Play is more than balls and marbles.
Play is more than games and rules.
Play is about opening your mind to possibilities.
Play is about validating ideas and building self-esteem and worth.
Play is about the process, not about having a set way to get from A to Z.
Play is about letting go of control and exploring other people's ideas.
Play is about breaking down barriers both between people and within ourselves.
Play is about taking a moment amidst the chaos and heartbreak to embrace joy.
Play is powerful.

I didn’t believe that transforming boxes into unknown transportation devices would have so much impact. Nor did I believe that having none of our team's plans go as we thought could turn into such unique and engaging games. I wouldn’t have believed that having
children shred crafts after painstakingly helping them create them for two hours could be so fun if I joined in the shredding. These stories and lessons keep unfolding as I continue to play with play.

After my PAW experience I graduated from the University of Alberta Augustana Campus and found myself working full-time at Camp Kuriakos on Sylvan Lake. It was here where I was able to combine my rekindled love of play with my heart for God and appreciation for the outdoors. Inspiring adults to do ridiculous energizers, getting kids to make ‘snow’ forts, helping teens to let go of their inhibitions and engage in mud wars, were just a few of the ways I was able to play with play.

After working at Kuriakos for a year and half I came back to Augustana to work in Student and Residence Services as a Student Experience Coordinator. While sometimes I get stuck in office work, I make it my mission to help my colleagues and the student staff leaders (Residence Assistants). I co-lead in dorms to engage in a moment of play whenever we can. Whether this is getting my colleagues outside bouncing bouncy balls on the cement, or leading a paint night with students where there is no ‘wrong’ way to do it, or concocting giant bubble mix to play with during a retreat with our Residence Assistants- I continue to see the ways that play can break down barriers and build connections.

Play is powerful. And as I only begin to grasp what it means to embrace these moments my hope for you is that you also take the time and embrace a moment of play today.

I also just want to say a huge thanks to Mary Ann for sharing her leadership and passion for this work with so many, and to my teammates Anthony, Lisa and Kaitlyn- the experience couldn’t have been what it was without you!

—Hugs, Sarah
PAW Team 2018: Team Peru

Team Peru this summer worked at 5 different organizations helping a wide range of kids from age 3-13. Their groups enjoyed doing lots of free play, crafts, and dancing; for example we used lots of chalk, did lots of jump rope, child led games like 'Where is my Duck?', and tried many hands on things like play dough, slime, and paper mache.

The team was also lucky enough to learn some traditional Inca games and exchange current popular games with the kids from both Canada & Peru. In addition, the 2018 team was able to develop a new relationship with another organization called the Association Ayuda a las Niñez. This school sees recreation as a core value, following health and education, which means the teachers were very involved and appreciative of the work. The PAW team was able to play with all of the students from here in grades 1-6 and they especially loved dancing & singing to music. The team enjoyed being in such a supportive environment and believes a great relationship will foster in the years to come.
Team Cambodia worked with 4 very unique agencies over the course of this summer. Playing with children from toddlers to teenagers, in a variety of play spaces and group sizes, with a wide range of abilities - called for team creativity, flexibility and created opportunities for diverse learning.

The variety of children and environments led to a variety of play! From yoga ball obstacle courses with the nursery children, to giant dance parties with the large classes at PIO, to making exploding volcanoes at Rabbit School - there was always new fun to be had.

We had amazing people supporting us in PP, allowing us to experience new things and ask questions to explore Cambodian culture more intimately. We learned about the country’s history, had dinner with local families, participated in monk blessings and practiced the Khmer language. We learned so much from the children, the teachers, our teammates and everyone we encountered on this journey and feel so grateful for the experience. We learned lessons, developed relationships and created memories that will last a life time.
Hello! I’ve been a member of the PAW Advisory Committee since early 2016 and have loved every moment! The Advisory Committee assembled is so diverse, eclectic and interesting and I feel quite honored to have been asked to be part of such a stellar group. My involvement in PAW happened in a bit of a round about way. After finishing up my Kinesiology degree in 2010, I went on to complete my MA with a focus in Adapted Physical Activity. It was during that time that I met Mary-Ann Rintoul and became more familiar with PAW. I was a privilege to be asked to be part of the Advisory Committee and I hope to give back and make a tangible impact to a service learning opportunity I believe wholeheartedly in.

I’m lucky to have a very active and engaging job. Currently I’m the Adapted Physical Education Specialist for Edmonton Catholic Schools in Early Learning. This includes working with little ones ages 3-6 with physical disabilities and movement challenges. Often their impairments pose challenges when participating physical activity, acquiring gross motor skills or in engaging in play alongside their peers. That’s where I come in! I work closely with families, classroom teachers, and Multidisciplinary Teams of Therapists, to provide gross motor equipment, strategies for inclusion and resources for games or activities to allow the all children to participate. It’s a job that requires constant innovation and creativity, and a role I am constantly learning in. You’ll often hear me exclaim that I never have the same day twice, and I’m so grateful for that simple fact! I also try to connect families to opportunities in their communities for recreation and play. Even if the kids aren’t quite ready to try some of the
more adventurous activities, I feel it’s important that families and school staff know about the options that are out there and that there is support available. It is a way to ensure kids are introduced early to having fun and have successful experience in the hopes they’ll stay active in the future. This interest is reflected in the volunteer work I do with Paralympic Sport Association (PSA) as a Board Member. PSA provides sport and recreation opportunities for children with disabilities.

My husband and I are parents to an energetic, beautiful and mischievous 2-year-old boy named Peter. He’s a whirlwind of curiosity! Peter loves puddles, is not afraid of hermit crabs (unlike his mom) and constantly has his pockets full of sticks and rocks. People who advocate for play, who create space for it to happen and who protect its powerful benefits are the best type of people to surround yourself with. You will not find a group of individuals who are more passionate about the work they’re doing and who will more fiercely defend the right’s of a child.

The students who participate in PAW give of themselves tremendously during their placement, but also benefit richly. I truly believe the work students do during their placements is transformational and enduring and then secondly, upon their return, these students become innovative and compassionate community leaders. Thank you for letting me be part of such an amazing journey!

A Message From Sokha Nen, Language Instructor, Cambodia

I like all play around the world team every year. And thank you all so much for coming to Cambodia and share new things with my people. Please say Hello to all of the team who had come to Cambodia for me. I miss all of them. I wish you all with the best. Take care.

Sokha
Mental Health Block Party: Play Day!

May 12, 2018

Play Around the World Alumni had a blast at the Old-Strathcona Farmers Market supporting the Mental Health Block Party and advocating for the importance of play for mental health—at any age!

With the creative support of Project Play, PAW had a space filled with loose parts for the imagination. The main components included sensory bins with a variety of colours and textures to explore, water gun painting, and of course boxes and paint!
For a third year in a row, we had a successful silent auction in “Social Street” space in the University of Alberta, Physical Activity and Wellness (PAW) Centre. There were cultural food stations, featuring food from Thailand, Cambodia, Northern Canada, and Peru. There were also giant games, a strolling magician, and performances from Peruvian Dancers.

PAW would like to thank all friends and families who came to support the 2018 team. It truly was a wonderful evening of food, drinks, entertainment, silent and live auction, and course lots of Play!

A warm thank-you to all of the PAW Alumni who continually come back to show their love and dedication for PAW. We could not keep the program going without the amazing PAW community (pictured above).
In the last month of our 2018 Peru trip, we began working with a new organization called the Association Ayuda a las Niñez. During our initial meetings, the director expressed that recreation was a high priority of the school, and was one of their core values following health, and education. The school has six grades of students ages 6-12, and they come from at risk homes all over Cusco and the surrounding areas. In the mornings they attend classes, and the afternoons they are taught skills and trades that may be useful to them such as: pottery, woodworking, metalworking, and baking.

The type of play we did here was free, unstructured play. This worked best due to the large groups of kids we played with, the small play space available, and the lack of desire to focus on planned, structured games.

One play moment that stands out to us was their joy for dancing to music. We taught them some of our favourite line dances, and they would ask to play their favourite songs so they could show us some of their moves. At first some of the boys were not enjoying the music, but warmed up quickly and were joining the congo line and following our moves. The final day we had at the Association we did not have our speaker, but Tara was able to play songs off of her phone, and she had a group of girls singing along and dancing to popular tunes.

Another fun part about the Association was that the teachers joined in on the play as well. They would be spinning kids around, passing volleyballs with some of the students, and seemed to really enjoy our time there. The teachers and director were very appreciative of our work, and it was nice to be in such a supportive environment from the staff. We think that the association and Play Around the World will be able to have a really good relationship in the years to come.

“It is a happy talent to know how to play.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson
Are People too Afraid for Free Play?

Homanet al. (2015) study is a meta-analysis and review of 46 qualitative studies, the ecological factors that affect children’s independent active free play, and possible actions for addressing some of these factors. The study defines children’s independent active free play as “child-organized and initiated spontaneous and voluntary activities that take place outdoors, outside of school hours and organized/adult-directed settings” (p. 1). Therefore, studies with settings that included adult direction or imposition of rules (e.g., recess) were excluded. Studies analyzed came from UK, US, Australia, Canada, The Netherlands, Japan, and New Zealand and showed that there is a reciprocal and multi-level influence in children’s independent active free play that includes parent, neighbourhood, society and policy interactions on and with the child. Lee et al. use concepts from Bronfenbrenner’s (1998,2005) ecological framework to showcase these interactions in Figure 2 below.

Findings identified that parental concerns surrounding safety were the primary factor that negatively impacted children’s access to children’s independent active free play (i.e., worries about strangers, bullying, and traffic). These safety concerns have increased over time. Parental measures to mitigate safety concerns included restricting spaces for play, accompanying children to play space, and/or enforcing the carrying of cell phones.

Major factors negatively affecting access to free play were the reduced sense of community/not knowing
people in the community; the perceived “good parenting ideal” of what other parents expect (monitoring at all times = good parenting whereas children roaming free = bad parenting); socioeconomic status (findings showed that lower socioeconomic status children were more likely to be allowed to roam free in comparison to their higher economic status counterparts); prioritizing other pursuits such as academics negatively impacted time allotted for independent active free play; more parents in the workforce, specifically mothers, impacted the amount of free play time; and the increasing privatization of public outdoor spaces indicated that space was not as accessible and implied that “children’s needs had become subservient to the needs of adults” (p. 7). Additionally, though not addressed specifically in all studies, policy issues were also noted as contributing to the lack play spaces and opportunities in that there was a need for children to be included in planning spaces - they need a voice in the spaces they will use.

Neighbourhood concerns such as lack of knowing others in the community, fewer children in the community to provide safety in numbers, and the increased distance of play spaces to dwellings negatively impacted access to free play. Findings also showed that there was a difference in children versus parent perceptions of safety (children often felt safe when parents did not find the space safe) and with preferences of play spaces. For example, “[t]eenagers found fixed playground equipment boring” and “[c]hildren preferred flexible uses of space and locations in their neighbourhoods in which they could engage in different types of games and activities” (p. 6).

Suggestions from the authors included “[t]raffic calming, crime prevention, and community policing” initiatives (p. 8). They note that to address the multifaceted, reciprocal components at work to ensure children’s independent active free play, there must be community-level solutions focused on social cohesion that put children’s voices at the centre of decisions.

How can we, as a community, reflect upon and act to help reduce the factors restricting children's free play?

-Summary by Meghan Klettke

Please read the entire fascinating article here:

https://doi.org/10.1186/s12966-015-0165-9

CURRENT PAW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Program Management Committee (PMC):

Program Director – Mary Ann Rintoul
Advisory Liaison – Kirsten Gamblin
Leadership – Anthony Bourque
Community Connections – Meghan Klettke & Nicole Farmer
Budget Coordinator – Jane Erdmann
Fundraising – Tracy Simon
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Mary Ann Rintoul
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