

January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017

All through 2017, The Lethbridge Sport Council will be working together with local sport organizations to provide opportunities for participants to try new sports, as part of **Lethbridge 2017: Get Active Through Sport**, a year-long celebration of Canada's 150th Anniversary of Confederation. This sport opportunity is called '52 in 52'.

January will start off with Canada's National sports, hockey and lacrosse, and will include sledge hockey and boxing as well. There are introductory sessions planned for all 4 sports, which will be free for all participants, and suitable for all ages and experience levels. The first of the 52 sports offered will be Ice Hockey, thanks to an opportunity offered by the Lethbridge Minor Hockey Association. If you haven't already, go to [www.lethbridge2017.ca](http://www.lethbridge2017.ca) to sign up for 52 in 52.

In 1859, Lacrosse was first declared the National Game of Canada, and a few years later, in 1875, the first indoor organized game of hockey was played in Montreal. Although the definitive origins of the games are both a little disputed, each game has evolved only slightly over the past century, and in 1994, Lacrosse was officially declared to be Canada's National Summer Sport, while hockey was declared Canada's National Winter Sport. It is interesting to note that both games can now be played year round in many cities.

Hockey has often been called 'Canada's National Pastime'. There are likely few in the older generations who don't have memories of hockey on the pond in the wintertime. A great quality of hockey is that it can be enjoyed by children, men and women, at a variety of levels of competition or recreation.

It is estimated that 1.76% of Canadians play hockey, which is the highest rate in the world. The second highest is Finland, at 1.34%. Let's compare that figure to the numbers in Lethbridge. Taking into account the current registration numbers for the Lethbridge Minor Hockey Association, Southern Alberta Recreational Hockey League, Lethbridge Oldtimers Sports Association, Lethbridge & Area Recreational Hockey Club and the rosters for the University of Lethbridge Pronghorn Men's and Women's teams as well as the Lethbridge Hurricanes, there are approximately 1916 individuals registered to play hockey this season in Lethbridge. In the 2016 Municipal election, the population of Lethbridge was 96,828, which means that in Lethbridge, 1.98% of Lethbridge residents play hockey, surpassing the national average. Add to that the sledge hockey players, the roller hockey players, the ball and field hockey players, and the countless number of people who play shinny hockey on a regular basis. No doubt about it, hockey is a popular activity in Lethbridge.

If you are interested in learning more about the organizations that offer hockey programming in Lethbridge, visit the sport directory at [lethbridgesportcouncil.ca](http://lethbridgesportcouncil.ca). If you want to give hockey a try, along with other sports that may be new or familiar to you, consider signing up for 52 in 52, a fun opportunity for the sport enthusiast, or anyone who wants to try new things in 2017.

Submitted by the Lethbridge Sport Council