

## **Media Release:**

### **Bishop Smith Elementary Students Participate in Sitting Volleyball Game Day**

**PEMBROKE, ON – March 3rd, 2025** – Grade 7 and 8 students at Bishop Smith Elementary School participated in an engaging and inclusive event featuring the Paralympic sport of sitting volleyball on February 25th. The event gave students a unique opportunity to learn about and experience a sport played on a smaller court with a lower net, adapted for athletes with physical disabilities.

The day began with an opening ceremony, including a land acknowledgement and prayer, followed by remarks from RCCDSB Outdoor/Physical Education and Elementary Pathways Special Project Assignment Teacher, Damian Solar, as he introduced the special guests in attendance. During the opening ceremony, Joe Millage, from ParaSport Ontario, presented a commemorative banner to the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, recognizing the school's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility in sports. RCCDSB was proud to announce that this was the first school event in the province to focus on Sitting Volleyball.

The event was made even more special by the presence of esteemed guests, including Jolan Wong, a celebrated Canadian Sitting Volleyball Paralympian. Wong had shared her experiences and demonstrated the skills required for the sport during visits to Pembroke and Petawawa schools in the fall, inspiring the students with her dedication and athleticism. ParaSport Ontario and the Ontario Volleyball Association, represented by Joe Millage, generously provided t-shirts for all participants and sponsored the closing ceremony awards. ParaSport Ontario also gifted two sledge hockey sleds to RCCDSB, adding to the inclusive sports equipment for students across Renfrew County to use and learn.

Students fully embraced the spirit of the day, creating team names, painting their faces, and making matching shirts. The event served as a valuable educational experience, promoting inclusivity and demonstrating that sport is for everyone. The referee's nominated players after each game, and awards were presented in each grade level. Heart n' Hustle, Fair Play, and Team Spirit Awards were presented to players during the closing ceremony.

The Board was grateful to have received sponsored awards from Ontario Volleyball Association and Parasport Ontario. RCCDSB would also like to give a special thanks to Roseburg MDF in Pembroke for sponsoring lunch for all participants. They are grateful to the community for providing incredible support for this event.

"This event was a fantastic opportunity for our students to experience an equitable and inclusive sport firsthand," said Clint Young, RCCDSB Superintendent of Education. "We sincerely appreciate the support of Parasport Ontario, Jolan Wong, and the Ontario Volleyball Association in helping make this day both memorable and impactful. A special thank you also goes to our

amazing team at RCCDSB for their hard work in organizing such an engaging and meaningful event.”

The event successfully showcased the power of sport to break down barriers and create a more inclusive community. Bishop Smith Elementary School is proud to have hosted this event and looks forward to continuing to promote accessibility and participation in sports for all students.







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