

## **BATTLEFORDS AAA SHARKS REPORT – submitted by Jeanne Gilchrist, Director/Treasurer April 20, 2023**

Preparing the report for BMHA's Spring Meeting is always an opportunity to reflect on the recently finished season.

This report provides a recap of some difficult decisions, moving the program forward as well as activities & contributions that have been positive for both the organization and the community at large.

At this elite level of hockey, as we are all aware, being in 7<sup>th</sup> place with a W2, L25, 3 OTW record puts us at the bottom of the standings. The season started off well, with a roster of 17 keen on picking up the momentum from the end of the 2021-22 season. Several games were close, losing by only 1 or 2 goals. However, by December 2022 it became apparent this was not the season anyone was looking for. Morale was low and many players were frustrated with their development. Concerns were being brought forward not only within our association but also the larger hockey community.

It's the board's job to be proactive, to listen to concerns, do our homework and make decisions that best serve the players and the organization, while continuing to support and promote female hockey. It was this very process that aided the board in the difficult decision to make a coaching change.

The decision was made with the best interests of the players and the program moving forward. The hope was to provide a reset, a fresh slate and that it would provide a positive atmosphere in the dressing room for the remainder of the season.

It was also a turning point that presented its own set of unforeseen challenges. There were lessons learned. It became apparent the communication between the board and the players & their parents was not as clear as the board presumed. We have noted the areas where questions arose. Moving forward we will ensure a clear understanding of policies and procedures.

Despite concerns raised during this season, the board is the stable foundation which remains constant. Players join our organization for a maximum of three years and then move on into their lives as young adults. Currently the Board consists of myself as Director/Treasurer, Wayne Brazeau as Secretary, Roger Blaquiere as Director of Scouting, Steph Green as Billet Coordinator/Member at Large, Kyle Kellgren and Patricia Mickeljohn as BMHA Reps, Ashley Rafuse, Erik Marcoux, and Noel Kingwell as Members at Large.

The board members have a depth of knowledge, both professionally, personally and through volunteering over many combined years within all areas of the hockey experience. This serves us well. Each board member is passionate about keeping the Battlefords AAA female hockey program evolving and organized. Key to our programming is mindful steps, whether at the board level, or for the players on the ice or in school. All of which will naturally pave the way to success.

Carolanne Pylypow stepped down as Secretary in August 2022. We were grateful for her knowledge and commitment to the association during the previous four years.

The following is a list of our contributions to The Battlefords that are part of our season's hockey experience:

- Participation in the Town of Battlefords Parade (Float)
- Visiting local businesses before the Home Opener to spread the word
- Junior Sharks (U13 and under participation at home games)
- Home Game events organized by volunteer Jennifer Whyte
  - Home Opener Parking Lot Kick-Off BBQ with proceeds to BGC of the Battlefords
  - Local Sponsors partnered with themed events such as Halloween, prizes & giveaways as well as support of our local food bank, Miwasin Kikanow clients, and a Billet Family Appreciation Evening
  - <https://www.facebook.com/bfordsharks/photos>
  
- We were able to increase our exposure in The Battlefords with the following:
  - Locally sponsored radio ads on Q98
  - Battlefords Now Articles by Martin Martinson – link to most current article below:
    - <https://battlefordsnow.com/2023/04/19/aaa-sharks-to-hold-spring-camp-this-weekend/>
  - Access Communication of some home games (more planned for 2023-24)

**Update on what's next for the program:**

Lastly, while this report is typically a recap of the season, currently it is also important to provide an update on what's next for the program. Continuing to sit in seventh place is not in the best interests of the association. However, being here, where there is nowhere to go but up, allows us to consider all future possibilities. "The sky is the limit" has really allowed us to consider ideas that don't box in either the players, coaches, or the board.

There has been the implementation of a new annual process to Call-Out. It's an opportunity for individuals to put their names forward for a variety of positions. Coaching is about finding common goals and communicating those common goals to bring everyone into the fold and pulling in the same direction. For our board, it provides possible candidates, for the upcoming season, or a season a few years down the road.

We are very pleased that through this process we have hired Nolan Horbach as head coach for the 2023-24 Season.

- Key to future plans is remaining grounded in our vision statement.
  - We are dedicated to helping enthusiastic and competitive young women achieve the highest level of hockey.
  - We provide the opportunity, coaching and positive team environment for young hockey players to develop into outstanding young women.
  - We've also prioritized education and communication with parents and other stakeholders.
  
- We want to spread the word about how our team operates, what one can expect,
- Specifically for Players and Parents to choose the Sharks as their #1 choice for AAA.

It would be remiss to conclude this report without providing a heartfelt thank you to BMHA, The Town of Battleford Rec Department & arena staff, referees, our parents, billet parents, coaches, managers, music man, game announcer, other support staff, fans, sponsors, and including each person who has anonymously contributed with the smallest of details and support throughout the season!