



BY SCOTT TAYLOR

Photos by Carlos Lopez, James Carey Lauder and courtesy of Jets Hockey Development

HOCKEY FOR ALL

THE DEMOGRAPHICS ARE CHANGING. AND, IN THE FUTURE, THE CHANGE WILL BE PROFOUND.

According to David Sattler, the general manager of Winnipeg's hockey for all centre, the sport of hockey needs to change with the times or it might be left behind.

"We have a plan to help grow the game in emerging communities in Winnipeg and the province," said Sattler, fully understanding the numbers spread out in front of him. "If you look at Manitoba's demographics over the last decade and what it will look like over the next 20-30 years, South Asian and Filipino communities already make

up a sizable group of the population, particularly in Winnipeg. By the time we get to 2040, a significant per cent of the population will be represented by these two communities, as well as by our Indigenous communities.

"For our city, our province and for much of the prairies, hockey is what drives the engine in the winter, whether it's the Jets or the NHL, the CHL, right through to Jr. A and AAA minor hockey programs. If we don't have kids sign up for minor hockey, we don't have kids who go on and play at those higher levels and we don't have kids who grow up to be fans of the Winnipeg Jets and the game in general. At some point, the hopes of having nine or 10 teams at different levels, or even one team at every level, will become difficult if we don't

try to introduce our sport to our new communities."

In order to reach people from both emerging communities and non-traditional hockey communities, Sattler and the folks at True North Sports + Entertainment have partnered with both corporate and community programs to introduce the game to people who might not consider hockey as a pastime.

Thanks to Scotiabank's hockey for all and Grow the Game programs and Bauer's First Shift (through an NHL/NHLPA partnership) along with Apna Hockey's ability to reach the South Asian Community, Jets Hockey Development has been proactive when it comes to encouraging non-traditional communities to embrace the game.

"This program has been



TWO OF THE DRIVING FORCES BEHIND GROW THE GAME, GANNI MAAN AND RON CANTIVEROS. MISSING ALLAN CHAN



JOSH MORRISSEY TOOK PART IN THE CEREMONIAL OPENING FACEOFF AT FILIPINO HERITAGE NIGHT AT CANADA LIFE CENTRE LAST SEASON AGAINST THE DALLAS STARS. DALLAS CENTRE DYLAN ROBERTSON IS OF FILIPINO DESCENT HIMSELF.

dreamt about for a while, but until Scotiabank came on board as venue naming partner at hockey for all centre and set aside additional funding into helping Grow the Game through their hockey for all program, it was always more of a dream than a reality,” Sattler explained. “It was always, ‘How can you do this in a sustainable way to get kids involved that aren’t in traditional hockey communities?’ Our goal is that the kids who go through the Grow the Game, First Shift and the Second Shift programs will join our local minor hockey organizations and that will lead to a tsunami of non-traditional hockey communities taking part at all levels and roles in the game. “As well, we have partnered with Apna Hockey to help

grow the game locally. They are the industry leader in Canada when it comes to reaching out to South Asian communities. The organization is headed by Lali Toor and former pro player Dampy Brar with the goal to make players from South Asian communities more visible in the sport. The organization has been so successful in Calgary and Edmonton that it won the 2020 NHL Willie O’ Ree Community Hero Award for the work they do. “Our partnership includes a donation to the organization to help grow the game of hockey in the South Asian and Filipino communities in Winnipeg and establish an endowment fund to ensure the sport is accessible to members of the community. When I was first

introduced to Lali he shared that the company name, Apna Hockey, translates to Our Hockey in Punjabi. “Apna Hockey is going to ensure instructors for these programs are representatives of the communities that are partaking in the program. They will be used as a resource to ensure that the programming offered is appropriate on all levels and provides guidance on ways to grow the sport amongst the communities.” The South Asian and Filipino communities have long been active in the Manitoba sports scene. However, hockey hasn’t always been viewed as a sport of choice. “Cricket and basketball have large followings within the two

communities so we aren’t trying to push those out, we’re simply trying to introduce hockey,” Sattler said. “When you live in a province like Manitoba where it’s particularly cold for four months of the year and somewhat enjoyable for another four, we want to provide these kids and their families with an athletic outlet through hockey. “We believe the way to do that is through youth. Not only can we introduce them to the game and allow them to play something they might not have experienced, but it’s also about bringing their families into the ecosystem as well. The programs that we’re running are not only for youth and their on-ice development but also to provide another

space where these families can connect in the community.” In the end, it’s all about diversity. And there is no better place to do that than in Manitoba where three young Winnipeg women, Larissa and Hanna Pagdato and Jordy Wyant, just played for the Philippines at a major IIHF event. “We’re hoping this will build bridges and create diversity in a sport that right now, doesn’t have as much diversity as other sports we watch, play and enjoy,” said Sattler. “One of the surprising things with the Grow the Game program that we did in May and June is that we partnered with Ganni Maan, Allan Chan and Ron Cantiveros, to find kids who are already in minor hockey. They found 46 kids in a very short time from South Asian and Filipino backgrounds. Interestingly, Ganni and Allan sit on the Winnipeg Jets Season Ticket Member Advisory Council and they both have kids involved in the game, as does Ron, and all three have an interest in seeing their communities buy into hockey. “Now, these are three

of the most hardcore hockey fans you’ll find. “Grow the Game has been very focused on South Asian and Filipino programs since it started and it will continue that way for a long time, but when we get this program established, we want to look further into the female side of the game as well, and work with our partners at Manitoba Possible to have additional Sledge Hockey opportunities. We want to provide more kids with an opportunity to play who might not otherwise have it. “What we found when we did that program was that we had almost 50 kids who played minor hockey from A3 to AAA, but when you consider the size of Hockey Manitoba’s registration numbers we’re talking about a per cent of a per cent coming from these communities. “The goal with these players was to provide on-ice development and leadership opportunities where we can use them as mentors for the kids going into the First Shift program. One of the things we heard a lot during the years as we’ve tried to design



program that would reach out to new communities in an authentic way was that kids and families are more driven to take part in hockey or other sports if they can see other people like them participating in the game. Whether it’s coaches or athletes. We’re not here to just sell them the game. What we want at the end of this program is fans of the game in general.” Sattler believes that the equipment and lessons a kid receives from First Shift, even if he or she never signs up for minor hockey, should still be considered a

success if the kids just go to the outdoor rink or go to the Forks and skate the river trail and hang out with friends. “True North is invested in hockey long-term,” Sattler said. “So, when we put a stick in a five-year-old’s hands, we don’t know where that stick will take that youngster in 20 years, but the more people we get on the ice, the more equipment we get to these kids, we believe the love of the game will grow with them. We know this because we have a country of 40 million people who are in love with the game. So, we want to provide the opportunity.”

“WE’RE HOPING THIS WILL BUILD BRIDGES AND CREATE DIVERSITY.”

- DAVID SATTLER, GENERAL MANAGER OF HOCKEY FOR ALL CENTRE



GROW THE GAME