

# Coaches Rock Ringette

Regina Ringette Association

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## Pandemic means creative team events

Ask any ringette player and they're likely to tell you that the most enjoyable aspect of any ringette season is the socializing and friendships.

A global pandemic obviously isn't conducive for socializing.

Sheryl Bird, head coach of the U19A Regina RIPT, used an innovative way to introduce her new teammates to one another – they assembled in the parking lot of the old Costco location in east Regina.

"A Costco parking lot is a little unusual for a team meeting," Bird said with a laugh. "Usually, we would meet in a meeting room like the Ringette Regina office. But with the COVID-19 restrictions at that time, meeting indoors was not possible and we thought it was important to have a face

to face meeting. So other places were passed around like meeting in a park etc. In the end we came up with the old Costco parking lot due to the space."

The meeting actually turned out to be an enjoyable experience. It was a warm early October day and parents and players got to know each other as they spread themselves out in lawn chairs in the vacant parking lot.

"I think meeting this way started off the importance of team bonding for our group," said Bird. "It was just all about trying to find unique ways to meet and keep some kind of 'normal' during the playing season."

The RIPT have also used ZOOM and other electronic communication to keep the team together – but according to Bird nothing beats getting together

in person.

"Zoom meetings are great and we have used Zoom for RIPT one on ones," she said. "But we were fortunate that our team was made early and the weather was still nice. We thought this would be a great and little unusual way to meet everyone and while being a little more personable."

Looking back on the event, Bird says in hindsight the meeting might have been even better had the team opted for the current Costco location.

"Since we met at the old Costco there were no chicken wings or hot dogs," she said. "But the parking lot meeting was a good start to our season except at the end of the meeting when had hundreds of seagulls fly over our heads."

## Trying to stay normal in very unusual times

For as long as anyone can remember sports teams got photos together.

It's usually always done before the start or at the end of a practice, takes only a few minutes and is a great memento that hangs on the wall of your parent's rec room for years and years to come.

But even taking a team picture is problematic during a global pandemic.

Squeezing a team of players closely together and then getting a professional photographer to come into an indoor space to take the picture isn't allowed within the current COVID guidelines.

Rick Green, head coach of the U12B Yeti, found a creative way for his team to get their team photo completed.

"After discussion with our photographer Keith Hershmillier, we decided that after our practice at the Jack Hamilton we would look for a location in AE Wilson Park," Green explained. "We wanted to find somewhere that we could social distance and also still have the fun experience of a team picture – these are memories that not only the parents, but also the athletes will remember well



The U12B Yeti pose for an outdoor team photograph.

into the future."

The team settled on a picture where players spread out over the rise of the large hill in the park next to the play structure at Rick Hansen park.

While it's not the traditional on-ice picture, it's something different that players will be able to associate for years to come as the strange picture that had to be taken during the strange pandemic season.

"The team thought it was a great idea," said Green. "The outside option still gave them the chance to laugh, tell jokes, chat and see their team all together as one."

"It actually was a fun experience and the final picture turned out excellent with Wascana Creek, the bridge, hills and trees in the background."

Green said he's noticed that the players and parents associated with his U12 Yeti have remained positive about the restrictions and changes that have resulted from COVID-19.

"The parents, players and coaches have really been good sports when it comes to wearing their masks," he said. "I think everyone is just happy to be at the rink and playing the game that we all love."