

Pickleball Canada's Ambassador Program



Latest Updates from
Pickleball Canada



Highlights of the Program

Pickleball Canada Ambassador Program

Goal of the Program:

Create a team of pickleball players to extend Pickleball Canada's communication efforts to their members and general public.

Outcomes:

- Pickleball Canada will have a better grasp on what the membership needs and wants from a communication standpoint.
- Pickleball Canada will gain a better relationship with their club members.
- Allows for a greater connection between members and Pickleball Canada's Stakeholders as they have access to the program.



The Selection Process:

The selection remained similar to the year prior with a communication released in early January welcoming Ambassador Applications for 2026.

For 2026, we have 13 returning Ambassadors and are welcoming 13 new Ambassadors to the program. This brings the total to 26 Ambassadors nationwide, with representation in every province and one territory across Canada.



Expectation for Pickleball Canada's External Stakeholders

Pickleball Canada's External Stakeholders have the opportunity to engage in this program in the following ways:

- Ability to use Ambassadors for their marketing campaigns by communicating their goals and initiatives through Pickleball Canada Staff
- Feature Ambassadors on their social media platforms by connecting with the Ambassadors through marketing campaigns
- Form connections with Pickleball Canada's Ambassador's through marketing initiatives.



Meet Pickleball Canada's Ambassadors

British Columbia



Name: Asaan Maherali

Location: Sooke, British Columbia

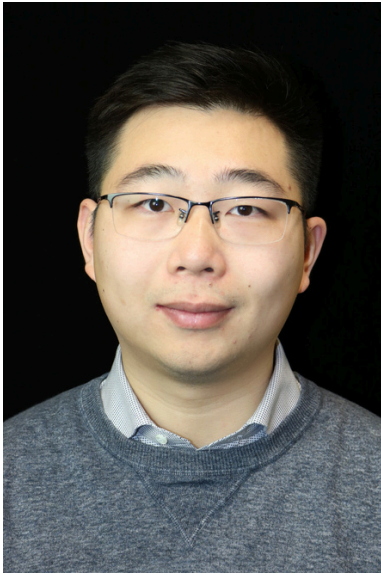
About:

Asaan is a dedicated pickleball player, tournament director, and community builder based in Sooke, BC. Driven by a genuine passion for the sport, he has directed multiple tournaments and managed local leagues that bring together players of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels. His events are intentionally designed to strengthen community connection and create welcoming spaces for everyone who steps onto the court.

Committed to expanding the reach of pickleball across British Columbia, Asaan advocates for greater accessibility, more entry points for new players, and opportunities that support both recreational and competitive growth. He is especially focused on building inclusive environments that bridge generational gaps and reflect the spirit of the sport: fun, connection, and continuous learning.

Alongside his volunteer and community work, Asaan co-founded Court Crushers, a local pickleball services initiative that supports events and player development throughout the region. This work complements his broader mission to help shape the future of pickleball by fostering environments where players feel empowered to play, improve, and belong.

When he's not organizing or competing, Asaan enjoys exploring Vancouver Island and spending time with his husband and dogs. As a Pickleball Canada Ambassador, he aims to champion growth, accessibility, and community engagement while inspiring others to discover the joy of the game.



Name: Daniel Zhou

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia

About:

Daniel Zhou is based in Vancouver and offers bilingual (English/Mandarin) support to help new players confidently get started in pickleball.

He hosts biweekly DUPR-rated events and actively builds community through clinics, tournaments, and educational content. Through his social platforms, Daniel promotes inclusive, high-quality pickleball experiences and is committed to growing the sport across Canada.



Name: Zeyi Yang

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia

About:

Zeyi (Zoey) Yang is a Vancouver-based athlete and entrepreneur currently pursuing an MBA at UBC Sauder. She is actively involved in the local sports community, competing in ultimate frisbee and pickleball while organizing social and competitive play.

Passionate about growing emerging sports, Zoey focuses on building inclusive, community-driven experiences, especially for young professionals. With a background in entrepreneurship and digital innovation, she aims to expand pickleball's reach and connect diverse communities through sport.

As a Pickleball Canada Ambassador, Zoey is committed to promoting the game and inspiring more people to get involved.



Name: Veronique Dewilde

Location: Airdrie, Alberta

About:

Veronique Dewilde is a passionate and accomplished pickleball player based in Airdrie, Alberta. As a certified Level 2 instructor, she actively contributes to the local pickleball community through coaching and mentorship. Her dedication to the sport is evident in her role as a board member of the Airdrie Pickleball Club, where she also serves as the Fundraising & Sponsorship Coordinator and IT & Website Director. Veronique's commitment to promoting pickleball extends to organizing and coaching at local camps, such as those offered by Airdrie Camps and APC.

In addition to her on-court involvement, Veronique is the owner of Pickled Passion, an online store that offers a variety of pickleball-related merchandise, including apparel, accessories, and equipment. Through Pickled Passion, she aims to provide quality products that enhance the playing experience for pickleball enthusiasts across Canada, US and the rest of the world, as she is a world traveler, playing pickleball around the world



Name: Yan Zhao

Location: Edmonton, Alberta

About:

I am Yan Zhao, from Edmonton, Alberta. My relationship with pickleball was love at first 'volley'. I started playing pickleball in August, 2022 and I have been having so much fun playing, competing and connecting with players ever since. Super excited that I will have the opportunity to advocate the sport with the platforms provided by Pickleball Canada. Feel free to reach out if you are interested in doing drills, setting up some games or comparing notes on our pickleball journeys.

Saskatchewan



Name: Amy Klassen

Location: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

About:

I'm Amy, a passionate pickleball enthusiast and ambassador dedicated to growing this incredible sport in Saskatoon. I first picked up a paddle in 2023, and I've been hooked ever since.

Outside of pickleball, I'm a wife and mom to two amazing girls, and I understand how important it is to balance family, work, and hobbies. I also run my own small business, where I personalize and customize items like reusable cups and ornaments. It's this combination of family, entrepreneurship, and sport that drives my passion for pickleball and its community.

As a pickleball ambassador, my goal is to introduce people of all ages and skill levels to the sport, emphasizing its inclusivity, fun, and fitness benefits. Whether I'm hosting beginner clinics, promoting local tournaments, or simply sharing my love for the game, I'm committed to growing the pickleball community and making it accessible to everyone.

When I'm not playing or running my business, you can find me on Instagram @amyklassen. Let's connect and grow the game together!



Name: Emily Laing

Location: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

About:

I started playing pickleball at 27 and immediately fell in love with the sport. What began as a fun family activity quickly grew into joining my local pickleball league and becoming more involved in the community.

I'm passionate about introducing pickleball to new audiences especially younger players—and showing that there's a place for everyone in the sport. I believe in promoting ambassadors at all skill levels and highlighting that growth and involvement are possible for anyone.

My goal is to help build an inclusive, supportive community where players of all genders, backgrounds, and abilities feel welcome. I'm particularly driven to empower mothers and young women, using pickleball as a way to build confidence, connection, and self-esteem.

Manitoba



Name: Michelle Bergen

Location: Winnipeg, Manitoba

About:

At 54 and proudly from Winnipeg, pickleball is a huge part of my life. Whether I'm at home or traveling, I'm always on the lookout for a new court and a great game. The sport has become my favorite way to stay active, meet new people, and challenge myself. My weight loss journey and fitness certification have also fueled my passion for health and helping others feel their best. In my career, I love working with my team, leading with purpose, and inspiring others to become the best version of themselves. Off the clock, you'll most likely find me paddle in hand, chasing my next match.

Ontario



Name: Elijah Ferguson

Location: Kemptville, Ontario

About:

Elijah comes from an athletic background and works in the construction industry, where he developed a strong work ethic and appreciation for teamwork and community. He discovered pickleball as a way to reconnect with competition and quickly developed a passion for both the sport and the social connections that come with it.

As an Ambassador with Pickleball Canada, Elijah enjoys being involved in local programs, events, and competitive play while supporting the continued growth of pickleball across Canada.

He values the balance the sport brings through competition, community, and staying active.



Name: Gina Robinson

Location: Newmarket, Ontario

About:

Gina Robinson has lived in the Newmarket/Aurora area with her family for 18 years, where she has been actively involved in her community while raising three children. Over the years, she has volunteered for local events and sports and previously worked in an administrative role at the York Region District School Board. She also ran her own event planning business until deciding to slow things down to enjoy spending time outdoors, hiking, cooking, relaxing at her cottage and most of all travelling and exploring new places.

More recently, Gina discovered a love for pickleball, appreciating the fast pace and the social connections it brings. Gina values family, community, and the simple joys of life.



Name: John Yatco

Location: Ottawa, Ontario

About:

If someone would have told me in 2021 when I picked up my first pickleball paddle, I'd be a Pickleball Canada Ambassador, I'd think they were delusional. It's an honour being chosen because I see this as an opportunity to help make a difference at the community, regional, and national levels. There's no doubt pickleball is a popular sport and a steady stream of new players is the norm.

What'll be tough is maintaining a pickleball culture where every demographic is welcome without having to worry about the brand they wear, equipment they use, or DUPR score. I've noticed a shift in some players' perception of their "ideal" partner or opponent. In my opinion, as long as you can hit a plastic ball over a 3 ft. high net within a 20 ft. x 44 ft. area, you're good enough to play on the same court.

I'm ready for the challenge and I can't wait to start my journey as a Pickleball Canada Ambassador!



Name: Hao Hong

Location: Oakville, Ontario

About:

I am Hao, a pickleball coach and community organizer based in Oakville, Ontario. I started playing pickleball because I loved how fun, social, and welcoming the sport is – and I quickly became passionate about helping it grow.

What excites me most about being a Pickleball Canada Ambassador is the chance to connect real players with the broader pickleball community – sharing stories, ideas, and what people need to feel welcome and informed on their pickleball journey. Through my work as President of the Oakville Lynx Pickleball Club, I have seen how powerful pickleball can be in bringing people together, building friendships, and helping players grow in confidence both on and off the court. I love supporting others as they discover the sport, whether they are just starting out or looking to take their game to the next level.



Name: Mehdi Salemi

Location: Ottawa, Ontario

About:

I'm Mehdi I love fitness, tech, and...pickleball! I'm a gym owner turned software dev, now on a mission to bring it all together.



Name: **Maryam Bondak**

Location: **Toronto, Ontario**

About:

Hello, I'm Maryam! I started playing pickleball in May 2025 and quickly fell in love with both the sport and the community behind it. I moved to Canada five years ago, and building connections through sports and community has meant a lot to me. I'm a very vocal and outgoing person, and I love bringing energy onto the court while helping new players feel welcome and confident.

Outside of pickleball, I'm a Global Management student at TMU with a background in hospitality and tutoring, so connecting with people has always been a big part of who I am.

Quebec



Name: **Camille Ste-Marie**

Location: **Montreal, Quebec**

About:

I have been playing pickleball for the past two years and competed at the Canadian Championship in Winnipeg in 2025. I currently work in the pickleball industry and am passionate about growing the sport both on and off the court. I hold a Master's degree in Marketing and bring a strong professional background to my work and involvement in the field.



Name: Charline Rémillard

Location: Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec

About:

I'm a young athlete passionate about pickleball, a sport that my whole family plays and that brings us together. I quickly stood out thanks to my constant improvement, my sportsmanship, and my energy on the court. As an active member of my community, I'm inspired by the values of family, inclusion, and pushing myself to new heights.

I play mainly on Montreal's South Shore, and I've had the opportunity to compete in provincial, national, and international tournaments, including the MiLP in Dallas and the PPA Tour in Daytona Beach.

I am part of a competitive team in the South Shore Interclub Pickleball League (LPIRS). I serve on the board of directors of our local club and act as a governor for the LPIRS. I am actively involved in the community, particularly through volunteering and creating programs that promote inclusion.

Driven by passion, discipline, and a desire to raise the profile of pickleball, I aim to continue promoting this sport while sharing my experiences on social media and encouraging accessibility for all.

It is with great pride that I take on the role of ambassador for Pickleball Canada, determined to represent and promote this sport with enthusiasm and commitment.



Name: Sam-Luca Thifault

Location: Montreal, Quebec

About:

Sam-Luca Thifault is a former elite hockey player turned entrepreneur and certified pickleball coach. Having competed at high levels across North America, including being drafted to the QMJHL, he brings a strong background in performance, discipline, and athlete development. After transitioning from hockey, Sam-Luca has focused on growing the sport of pickleball in Canada through his company, SOMX Pickleball.

As the Founder and Head Coach of SOMX Pickleball, he leads clinics, tournaments, and player development programs designed to make the sport accessible, competitive, and community-driven. Sam-Luca is certified by Pickleball Canada (Levels 1 & 2) and is passionate about helping players of all ages and skill levels improve their game while creating memorable experiences on and off the court.

New Brunswick



Name: **Melissa Clark-Brennan**

Location: **Florenceville-Bristol, New Brunswick**

About:

I have been playing pickleball since Feb of 2024 when I was introduced to it by my father while on vacation in Mexico. I now make a point to play everyday and am passionate about teaching and growing the sport.

I obtained my level one instructor certification in July and am very excited to get back to playing on outdoor courts when the weather permits.

As a small business owner I'm able to set a flexible schedule that allows me to enjoy lots of play time and for that I am extremely thankful.

Nova Scotia



Name: **Bryce Dauphinee**

Location: **Kentville, Nova Scotia**

About:

I'm 25 years old and from Kentville, Nova Scotia. I grew up playing competitive hockey and other sports, which gave me the chance to travel and compete at a high level.

During COVID, I picked up a pickleball paddle with friends and quickly got hooked. What started as something casual turned into a real passion. I love competing and helping grow the sport in my community.

This is my second year with Pickleball Canada, and I'm excited to keep building, competing, and connecting with great people through the game.



Name: Cara O'Leary

Location: Lakeview, Nova Scotia

About:

Cara O'Leary is a Level I Pickleball Coach, competitor, and content creator dedicated to growing the sport across Atlantic Canada and beyond. After being introduced to pickleball by her parents, she quickly developed a passion for the game and inclusive community. Over the past three years, she has started pickleball programs at two facilities in Halifax and has earned multiple medals in doubles and singles at Provincial, Atlantic and National competitions at the 3.5 and 4.0+ level.

Through her coaching platform, @cara.pickleball, she has coached hundreds of players and shares content on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, where she has posted more than 2500 pickleball videos of recreational and tournament play.

Cara has appeared on CTV Morning Live as a Pickleball Coach, has been featured in Fall River Living Magazine, and has traveled to Bradenton, Florida to discuss organizing Royal Caribbean Pickleball Cruises. Cara has just accepted an offer to work with Atlantic Pickleball Club in Prince Edward Island – give her a follow on socials @cara.pickleball to watch for future event announcements!

Cara is launching Atlantic Canada's first pickleball newsletter, connecting players, sharing stories, and supporting the continued growth of the game. Cara is excited to share her passion for the game and meet new people along the way!



Name: Michael Lanuevo

Location: Halifax, Nova Scotia

About:

Michael Lanuevo is a Certified Level II Pickleball Instructor, national medalist, and dedicated advocate for the growth of pickleball in Canada. Based in Nova Scotia, he is committed to helping players of all skill levels enhance their game and develop a lifelong passion for the sport.

As a high-level athlete, Michael has earned multiple medals in provincial, Atlantic, and national tournaments, showcasing his dedication and skill. Beyond competing, he is a respected pickleball coach, actively leading private and group lessons to nurture both recreational and competitive players. Michael currently teaches pickleball at several institutions across Nova Scotia.

Originally from the Philippines, Michael is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) by profession. His background in finance and accounting, combined with his strong analytical skills, has given him a structured and disciplined approach to both coaching and playing pickleball. His journey from a career in accounting to becoming a full-time pickleball instructor highlights his passion for the sport and his commitment to its growth in Nova Scotia and beyond.

With a strong foundation in racquet sports, including his experience as a former tennis instructor, Michael brings a strategic and well-rounded approach to his coaching. He is also a proud father and mentor, coaching his daughter, Martina Ava, who has already shown great promise as a young pickleball competitor.

Prince Edward Island



Name: Emily Le

Location: Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

About:

Emily Le is a Pickleball Canada Ambassador based in PEI. She is actively involved in her local pickleball community, helping organize programs, events, and initiatives that encourage participation across all ages and skill levels. Emily believes pickleball is more than a sport — it is a bridge that builds friendships, develops leadership, and strengthens communities. She is passionate about contributing to the continued growth of pickleball across Canada.

In addition to her ambassador role, Emily serves as President of the Vietnamese Association of PEI. Together with several community members, she co-founded the first pickleball club dedicated to newcomers and immigrants in the province — creating opportunities for year-round play, especially during the winter months, and helping individuals integrate quickly while staying connected to their second home.

Through this newly established club, Emily has built strong relationships with the seven other pickleball clubs across PEI. She is also part of the organizing team for the Atlantic Pickleball Championship in June 2026, which is expected to welcome 500–550 players from four Atlantic provinces: PEI, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

For Emily, pickleball is like daily breath and water — an essential part of life. With her deep passion and unwavering dedication to the sport, she strives to share that love with everyone — from children and youth to adults and seniors — inspiring inclusive growth and lifelong participation.



Name: Michelle Dyke

Location: Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

About:

Hi everyone, I'm Michelle from PEI. Pickleball has become such a meaningful part of my life — not just for the sport itself, but for the friendships and community it creates. I'm really excited to be part of this ambassador group and to support Pickleball Canada by showcasing the joy and inclusivity of the game.

Newfoundland & Labrador



Name: **Alison Hickman**

Location: **St. John's, Newfoundland**

About:

I've been involved in the pickleball community since 2021, and you'll find me on the courts at least five days a week. If I'm not playing, I'm volunteering, coaching, or convincing someone new to give pickleball a try! Over the years, I've been involved with various non-profit groups and sports organizations, always finding ways to give back to the community. When I'm not on the pickleball court, you might catch me playing hockey, climbing a mountain, or tackling a new DIY project. I'm excited to step into my new role as an Ambassador with Pickleball Canada and continue growing the love for this amazing sport!



Name: **David Summers**

Location: **St. John's, Newfoundland**

About:

David is a full-time physiotherapist and part-time pickleball and tennis coach. He is a certified Pickleball Canada Instructor Level 2 and a Tennis Canada Club Pro 1 coach. He also serves on Pickleball Canada's Coaching Program Task Team, helping to develop and streamline national coaching pathways. David is committed to growing the game and proudly supporting pickleball as an ambassador for the sport.

Nunavut



Name: Danarae Sommerville

Location: Iqaluit, Nunavut

About:

I caught the pickleball bug about three years ago. Ever since then, I have immersed myself in the sport, trying to improve my level. I love the skill involved in the game and the enjoyment I get out of playing, especially when the games are technically solid. I currently live in Iqaluit, Nunavut where pickleball is just starting to take off. I look forward to helping bring more awareness of the sport to Nunavut. Sports have always been a big part of my life - I was a dual-sport university athlete competing in both basketball and rugby. I helped lead the University of Ottawa to a National U Sport Rugby Championship victory in 2016. Aside from sports being a big part of my life, I currently work for the Nunavut Animal Hospital, where I get to feed my other passion - dogs. I look forward to working with Pickleball Canada to further the sport of pickleball across the country.

