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## **École Secondaire Notre Dame High School celebrates resounding success of the 1st Annual ND Unified Cougar Classic**

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[Red Deer, Alberta] — École Secondaire Notre Dame High School is thrilled to announce the successful conclusion of the 1st Annual ND Unified Cougar Classic, which took place on Friday, April 12. This inaugural event has taken a significant step in fostering inclusivity, understanding, and friendship within the school community.

NDHS Unified Head Coach, Alison Snow, reflected on the atmosphere throughout the event, saying, "The ND Unified Cougar Classic was less about competition and more about connections. Witnessing athletes and partners playing together, laughing, and supporting one another truly underscored that sports go beyond winning—they are about crafting a community where everyone feels they belong."

The classic epitomized the spirit of teamwork and mutual respect inherent in Unified Sports, by integrating athletes with intellectual disabilities and partners without into cohesive teams. Along with Unified Sports teams from Lindsay Thurber Comprehensive High School and Eckville Jr/Sr High School, the Notre Dame Cougars welcomed a total of 90 participants for a day of recreational competition in bean bag toss and 3-on-3 basketball, interspersed with lunch and lively dancing. Coach Erin McCorquindale noted the joy of seeing students from three different schools unite for fun and camaraderie, complete with a spirited conga line.

NDHS Unified athlete, Hailey Morin, shared her personal experience, stating, "I thought the 1st Annual Unified Cougar Classic was awesome! I was nervous at first, but once I met new people, I felt comfortable and safe on the court with everyone."

The event resonated with laughter and cheers, as the school grounds were filled with the vibrant energy of students, staff, families, sponsors, and fans supporting the athletes and partners. This overwhelming success has firmly established the ND Unified Cougar Classic as a foundational event in the school's ongoing commitment to acceptance and support for all students.

Looking forward, Coach Snow expressed optimism about the future impact of the event, saying, "The momentum of learning and understanding generated by this year's classic promises to have a lasting influence on our school community. We are eagerly anticipating our 2nd annual event!"



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For further details or inquiries, please contact **Coaches Alison Snow, Erin McCorquindale, or Reid Mills** at École Secondaire Notre Dame High School.

### **About ASAA Unified Sports**

ASAA Unified Sports is a pioneering program that unites high school students with and without intellectual disabilities through sports. By training and competing together, participants experience firsthand the importance of inclusion, respect, and the joy of sports. Our goal is to foster a world where everyone is recognized for their abilities and celebrated for their achievements.