

**CANADA SOCCER  
GUIDE TO ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION**





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# SECTION I: Introduction

Canada Soccer believes that a quality soccer environment embraces diversity, supports accessibility, and demonstrates inclusion. Since participants' first sport experiences usually happen at the community level, we must ensure that these experiences are positive, enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, and safe. In addition, access to sport should be as barrier-free as possible through programs, services, and support that meet individual needs and interests.

"A safe, welcoming and inclusive sport system is one where those in every role in sport (athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, board members and administrators), feel that: they belong and are valued; their voices are heard; they have a right to choice and consent; they face no inequitable barriers to leadership roles, and they are encouraged and supported to take these on if they so choose, and there are people like them among every role in the sporting system" (Canadian Paralympic Committee, 2019).

The Canada Soccer Guide to Accessibility and Inclusion (the Guide), as an element of the Canada Soccer Club Licensing Program, presents information, resources, and guidance to support the development of accessible, inclusive, and welcoming soccer environments. "Becoming a diverse and inclusive organization is an ongoing process and is about developing the capacity to become more diverse and inclusive, which will help to ensure that issues of inclusivity are considered on a regular basis. Developing capacity includes learning to recognize the barriers that other people face, learning to act accountably when we have inadvertently made a space less safe or inclusive and learning to recognize our unconscious biases" (Canadian Paralympic Committee, 2019)

## Community Engagement

Through the Club Licensing Program, organizations are encouraged to develop a Community Engagement Strategy as a part of their Strategic and Operational Plans. Many organizations are already aligning to the Club Licensing principle of fostering accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environments and demonstrating these behaviours in their programs, services, and interactions. Others have begun this journey through the development of programs and services targeting accessibility and inclusion.

Soccer organizations should be seen in their communities as more than providers of soccer programming. Organizations should be active contributors to the betterment of their community through both the provision of soccer programming and beyond. This includes active development of accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environments that reduce barriers to participation and reflect the diversity of the community in which the organization operates.

## Using the Guide

The Guide is divided into sections to cover several elements related to accessibility and inclusion. It focuses on starting points that can help organizations to become more diverse and inclusive and provides links to numerous supporting resources that will allow organizations to dig deeper in the areas that are most relevant to their unique context. The Guide is supported by and coordinated with other guides relating to Governance, Management and Operations, and Safety.

Finally, note that this Guide is not an instruction manual or policy document. It is a genuine guide, aimed at helping organizations be the best they can be, providing positive experiences for their players, coaches, match officials, and volunteers. Whether an organization is striving to reach a higher category of Club Licensing classification or not, Canada Soccer encourages all members to follow the principles, directions, and standards laid out purely for their own benefit, and at their discretion.



Thank you for taking the time to read this Guide and for your commitment and contributions to soccer in Canada. We hope it helps your efforts to build great soccer organizations around the country!

## Accessible, Inclusive, and Welcoming Environments

Understanding accessibility and inclusion can be challenging. Accessibility is an outcome (Can I/my child play soccer? Does your organization have a program for me/my child?), whereas inclusion is a process or a behaviour and is therefore ongoing (What environments is my organization creating to ensure everyone feels like they are welcome and belong? How are we doing this?). To begin to support the development of accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environments, the following definitions have been adapted from the Canadian Paralympic Committee's Creating a Safe, Welcoming and Inclusive Sport Environment in Canadian Sport Resource Document, the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport Policy and Practice Template for Sport Organizations, and other sources as cited.

**Welcoming** – A welcoming environment has a culture that ensures everyone involved in, or participating in, soccer is made to feel actively encouraged, included, and valued. It involves actively seeking to understand and remove barriers to full and meaningful participation and bridges the gap for people who may have previously felt excluded. These changes help to ensure that soccer is seen as more appealing to potential participants.

**Inclusive** – An inclusive environment is one where people have both the feeling and reality of belonging, where they can participate in ways that are meaningful to them, and where the activity contributes to them reaching their full potential. It involves understanding, accepting, and respecting diversity and actively involving people from the diverse groups represented within the community. Relevant and appropriate policies and services are developed and implemented, and there is an organizational commitment to eliminating barriers.

**Equity** – Equity is providing people with what they need to succeed. An equitable organization allocates resources, programs and decision-making in ways that result in similar opportunities and benefits to all participants. An equity lens recognizes that decisions need to account for unequal barriers to sport and leadership to ensure that everyone has access to the full range of opportunities to achieve the social, psychological, and physical benefits that come from participating in and leading sport and physical activity. Creating equity sometimes requires treating some people differently to 'level the playing field' (e.g., assisting individuals who face additional barriers to obtain equipment, training education, or other programs and services).

**Diversity** – Diversity refers to the broad spectrum of demographic characteristics of members of Canadian society, including, but not limited to, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, economic means, ability, age, religion, and education. Welcoming diversity not only acknowledges and respects differences but also recognizes the worth of every individual and their value to their communities and society at large.

**Intersectionality** – Intersectionality refers to the various forms (Social stratification) of how we describe ourselves such as age, economic status, race, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and gender for example, do not exist separately from each other but are interwoven and linked together.

**Sex** – The classification of people as male, female, or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person's reproductive system, hormones, chromosomes, and other physical characteristics, most notably by external genitalia.



**Gender** – Socially constructed roles and identities. Fluid and non-binary.

**Gender identity** – A person’s innermost sense of their own gender. This can include man, woman, both, neither or something else entirely. Gender also refers to a variety of social and behavioural characteristics (e.g., appearance, mannerisms). There are lots of words people may use to talk about their gender identity and expression.

**Gender Expression** – The way an individual communicates their gender identity to others. This is done through behaviour, body language, voice, emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics, choice of clothing, hairstyle, and wearing make-up and/or accessories. The traits and behaviours associated with masculinity and femininity are culturally specific and change over time.

**Gender binary** – A social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: man or woman. These genders are expected to correspond to sex assigned at birth: male or female. In the gender binary system, there is no room for diversity outside of man or woman, for living between genders or for crossing the binary. The gender binary system is rigid and restrictive for many people who feel that their natal sex (sex they were labelled with at birth) does not match up with their gender or that their gender is fluid and not fixed.

**Cisgender** – A term to describe a person whose gender identity corresponds with their birth- assigned sex (e.g., someone whose gender identity is man and was assigned male at birth).

**LGBTQI2S** – An umbrella acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and two-spirit. Other acronyms commonly used are LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ2.

**Trans** – An umbrella term that describes people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man in society. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross dressers (adjective) or gender non-conforming (gender diverse or genderqueer).

**Two-spirit** – An English umbrella term used by some indigenous people rather than, or in addition to, identifying as LGBTQ. This term affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity - including gender, sexuality, community, culture, and spirituality.

**Sexual orientation** – Sexual orientation describes human sexuality, from gay and lesbian to bisexual and heterosexual orientations. A person’s gender identity is fundamentally different from and not related to their sexual orientation. Because a person identifies as trans does not predict or reveal anything about their sexual orientation. A trans person may identify as gay, lesbian, queer, straight, or bisexual.

**Racialization/racialized person** – The process by which societies construct races as real, different and unequal in ways that matter to economic, political and social life.

**Unconscious bias** – Unconscious bias refers to social stereotypes about certain groups of people from outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from a tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.

**Allyship** – When a person of privilege seeks to support a marginalized group or individual.



# SECTION II: Engaging Underrepresented Groups and Reducing Barriers to Participation

## Sport and Belonging

“Sport has a unique power to attract, mobilize and inspire. By its very nature, sport is about participation. It is about inclusion and citizenship.”

~ The United Nations on Sport for Development and Peace

**What is belonging?** Simply put, belonging is being part of a collective we. It is about how much we believe we fit in a group or place – and how much that place or group welcomes or includes us. It is the result of connecting with others in rich relationships and engaging in our communities to make them better. Belonging is fundamental to our sense of happiness and well-being (Community Foundations of Canada, 2017).

**Vital Signs** is a national program led by community foundations and coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada. It leverages community knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and support action towards improving our quality of life. In 2017, Vital Signs explored the importance of sport and belonging, excerpts of which are included below. The full report is available [here](#).

A [2015 Vital Signs report explores the importance of belonging](#). From healthier and more meaningful lives; safer, more resilient, and more inclusive communities; flourishing culture and identity and greater community participation; a greater sense of belonging has an extraordinary capacity to transform our lives and our communities (Community Foundations of Canada, 2015). Yet research found that 38% of Canadians do not feel like they have a stake in their local community (Community Foundations of Canada, 2017). How can we strengthen belonging to each other and our communities? One of those ways is through sport. In partnership with the [True Sport Foundation](#), the [Vital Signs Report on Sport and Belonging](#) takes a closer look at how sport can strengthen belonging to each other and to our communities when grounded in fairness, excellence, inclusion and fun.

Sport is woven into the very fabric of every community in Canada. While we experience the benefits of sport directly as individuals, it can also play a major role in strengthening communities by bringing people together, building social capital, and fostering greater inclusion of excluded groups (Community Foundations of Canada, 2015). Sport at its best:

- Unites individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities together as players, volunteers, spectators, and advocates
- Connects people across geographic, economic, ethno-cultural and other boundaries
- Provides positive role models – from coaches to elite athletes
- Teaches sports, leadership and life skills that improve self-esteem and interpersonal skills
- Connects vulnerable people and groups with supportive networks, information, and services
- Encourages active citizenship for people of all ages, fosters trust, reciprocity, and a sense of security and belonging among community members



## Diversity and Inclusion

[Adopted from Canadian Paralympic Committee]

One of the major challenges in supporting diverse and inclusive environments is understanding where to start. To assist, the Canadian Paralympic Committee have designed a [resource page](#) and self-assessment tool to allow organizations to identify where to start. The resource page provides guidance on creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive sport environments, including a framework to support Attitude (Education and Awareness), Governance & Policy, Programs/Services, Communication/Portrayal, and Accountability, which includes tangible “Fundamentals for Success”.

The [Assessment Tool](#) is designed to help you frame and contextualize equitable inclusion in your sport organization, identify potential gaps and highlight areas upon which to focus attention as you work to create a more equitable, quality sport experience for all (Canadian Paralympic Committee, 2019).

## Online Training – Diversity and Inclusion Training for Volunteers

[Adopted from Sport for Life Society]

Volunteers are the public face of community events, not-for-profit organizations, and the corporate sponsors that support those events and organizations. It is important for diverse groups to be represented in volunteer workforces, and for members of diverse groups to be always treated respectfully by volunteers.

Diversity and Inclusion Training for Volunteers is an online training course that educates volunteers about diversity and inclusion, examines both acceptable and unacceptable attitudes and behaviours, and identifies appropriate ways to respond in situations involving disrespectful behaviours.

Upon completion of the course, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the benefits of diversity and the importance of treating others with dignity and respect
- Understand the concept of culture and identify practical strategies to improve communication between people from different cultural backgrounds
- Identify acceptable and unacceptable attitudes and behaviours
- Explain the terms discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and describe practical strategies to address such behaviours
- Know how to respond to situations involving disrespectful behaviours, whether as the victim, the accused, or a bystander
- To take this training visit - <https://sportforlife-sportpourelavie.ca/catalog.php>.

## Athletes with a Disability

Approximately 22% of Canadians have a sensory, intellectual, or physical disability (Statistics Canada, 2017), and some have more than one disability. These Canadians frequently face challenges in pursuing sport and physical activity, stemming largely from lack of access to suitable programming, facilities, coaching, and support in general.

In several countries, organizations have already created an array of adapted game formats and competitions to ensure all abilities are able to play soccer. Following their example, soccer can play a significant role in providing opportunities for persons with disabilities in Canada.



**Wellness to World Cup: LTPD for Players with Disabilities** provides an overview of soccer for athletes with a disability and presents a long-term development pathway for Canadians stretching from grassroots community soccer to international competition. At the grassroots level, the LTPD pathway is intended to help provincial, regional, and local soccer organizations to increase overall access and participation while providing player development for persons with a variety of abilities. At the high-performance stages, LTPD is specifically intended to support systematic player development for Paralympic 7-a-side soccer in Canada so that our players can consistently perform at the highest levels of international competition.

In addition to **Wellness to World Cup: LTPD for Players with Disabilities**, please find below several other resources in support of engaging Athletes with a Disability in soccer.

## eLearning – Coaching Athletes with a Disability

(Adopted from Coaching Association of Canada (CAC))

[Coaching Athletes with a Disability](#) is a National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) eLearning module that provides coaches with the knowledge to deliver quality, positive, sport experiences for athletes, specifically with behavioural, intellectual, physical, and sensory disabilities. You should expect to spend 45-60 minutes completing the module.

Coaching Athletes with a Disability NCCP training will give coaches the ability to:

- Explain the benefits of sport participation for persons with a disability;
- Communicate effectively and respectfully with, and regards to, persons with a disability;
- Design positive, safe, and inclusive sport experiences for persons with a disability; and
- Consider next steps in their professional development related to coaching persons with a disability.

## eLearning – Coaching Kids of All Abilities

(Adopted from JumpStart)

Help make every kid's first experience with sports a positive one! [Coaching Kids of All Abilities](#) is an online resource that helps coaches and youth activity leaders create inclusive sporting environments for kids of all abilities. Developed by JumpStart, in conjunction with Sport for Life Society, Active Living Alliance for Canadians with Disabilities, Canucks Autism Network, Défi sportif AlterGo, and the Coaching Association of Canada, this eLearning workshop includes two modules: Welcoming All Abilities and Supporting Positive Behaviours.

To take this training visit - <https://coachingallabilities.com/jumpstart/start.jsp>

## Workshop – Physical Literacy 501: Inclusive Physical Literacy

(Adopted from Sport for Life Society)

Physical Literacy 501 will help participants to understand the importance of physical literacy development for participants with disabilities. This workshop will take participants through what universally accessible programs are and how to plan and create them. It will also help participants learn about adaptations to fundamental involvement experience.



To take this training visit - <https://sportforlife-sportpouurlavie.ca/catalog.php>.

## Everyone Plays: A Guide to First Involvement and Quality Participation

(Adopted from Ontario Soccer)

Despite the clear benefits of participating in sport and recreation, children with disabilities are too often not in the game at all. Consequently, they miss out on key childhood experiences, opportunities to learn fundamental skills, and vital physical health benefits that last far into the future. All of this means that kids with disabilities do not have the same opportunities as their peers – a gap which only continues to grow as they develop into adults.

In support of providing access and opportunities for all and overcoming barriers to ensure everyone has an opportunity to play soccer, Ontario Soccer has developed [Everyone Plays – A Guide to First Involvement and Quality Participation](#). The guide provides soccer clubs across Ontario with information to help ensure soccer is accessible, inclusive, and a great experience for everyone.

## Achieving Accessibility

(Adopted from Ontario Soccer)

The philosophy of accessible soccer is to provide the beautiful game for all participants. Ontario Soccer believes that the intention of any accessible and inclusive soccer program should focus on providing an opportunity for players in their own community to discover soccer, develop skills, and build friendships as part of a team. The [Achieving Accessibility Guide](#) will assist soccer organizations in generating awareness about Accessible Soccer as well as assist all soccer organizations to meet the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements.

## Indigenous Peoples

In the [Truth and Reconciliation Report \(2015\)](#), sport and recreation are identified as tools for social development to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities (refer to Section 4.1 for additional information on the Truth and Reconciliation Report). Unfortunately, Indigenous peoples across Canada will have had different experiences with systemic and overt forms of discrimination, including (but not limited to) racism. For many Indigenous peoples, the primary purpose of sport is to build self-esteem among youth. Sport and activity give youth a sense of purpose and direction, and, in some cases, help them to engage in more appropriate activity during their free time while they find their way in the world (Aboriginal Sport Circle and Sport for Life Society, 2019).

Canada Soccer is committed to supporting increased sport participation in Indigenous communities and more Indigenous athletes to pursue sport excellence. To create the best experience in Indigenous sport and recreation, we need to recognize that many parts of Canada's mainstream sport pathway do not reflect the needs and cultural priorities of Indigenous peoples and work together to develop opportunities and pathways that try to respond to their real needs and goals (Aboriginal Sport Circle and Sport for Life Society, 2019).

The following are training, resources, and information that can inform individuals and organizations to enhance the opportunity for soccer as a contributor to the reconciliation movement in Canada.



## Online Training – Canadian Indigenous Culture Training - Truth and Reconciliation Edition

(Adopted from Sport for Life Society)

This course educates participants about the history, traditions, values, and beliefs of Canada's Indigenous Peoples. In accordance with the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action (2015), the course includes information about:

- The history and legacy of residential schools;
- The [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#);
- Treaties and Indigenous rights;
- Indigenous law; and,
- Indigenous-Crown relations.

Cultural awareness training is an integral component in creating environments where cultural diversity is supported, and where people from diverse cultural backgrounds communicate with each other respectfully. Ultimately, the goal of this course is to help non-Indigenous Canadians work with Indigenous Canadians in respectful ways.

To take this training visit - <https://sportforlife-sportpourelavie.ca/catalog.php>

## Workshop – Aboriginal Coaching Modules

(Adopted from Coaching Association of Canada (CAC))

The professional development of Aboriginal coaches through NCCP certification has been identified by the Aboriginal Sport Circle (ASC) as a national priority. To educate and promote the value of the NCCP and to establish meaningful participation of Aboriginal peoples in this national program, the ASC embarked on a multi-year process to develop supplemental training material for Aboriginal coaches taking NCCP workshops. The result of this process is the [Aboriginal Coaching Modules \(ACM\)](#), which responds to the need for a national training curriculum with content that reflects the uniqueness of Aboriginal cultures, values, and lifestyles.

The ACM are a professional development training tool for all coaches who work with Aboriginal athletes, as they become certified through the NCCP. The material in the ACM has been developed to meet the following learning objectives:

- Understanding the role of sport in Aboriginal communities;
- Understanding and positively influencing the community in which you coach;
- Coaching the whole person;
- Coaching beyond the physical to include the mental (intellectual and emotional), spiritual, and cultural;
- Responding to racism in sport;
- Establishing a code of behaviour for your team that respects differences and addresses racism; and,
- Helping those you coach to make healthy lifestyle choices.



# Indigenous Sport for Life – Long-Term Participant Pathway

(Adopted from Aboriginal Sport Circle and Sport for Life Society)

The **Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development Pathway** resource and **Supporting Indigenous Participation** workshop is designed to help sport and physical activity leaders and organizations across Canada enhance their understanding of how to support Indigenous participants and athletes in their programming. The purpose of these resources is to increase the percentage of Indigenous children who become physically literate, define a pathway for Indigenous athletes into high performance sport, and to increase the number of Indigenous peoples who are active for life.

The **Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development Pathway** presents a roadmap for developing sport and physical activity among First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This document is a reference for those who work with Indigenous participants in sport and recreation. The Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development Pathway has grown out of the understanding that mainstream pathways for sport development do not necessarily align with Indigenous needs or experiences. As such, the Indigenous Long-Term Participant Development Pathway tries to address that gap by outlining the key elements that need to be considered when planning, developing, and implementing programs for and with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities.

## Resources:

- [Indigenous Long-Term Participant Pathway 1.2](#)
- [Indigenous Long-Term Participant Pathway – Sport Organization Guide: Engaging Indigenous Participants A Guide to Action \(Guide 1 of 2\)](#)
- Indigenous Long-Term Participant Pathway – Competition Guide: Engaging Indigenous Participants A Guide to Action (Guide 2 of 2) – please contact Sport for Life Society (<https://sportforlife.ca>) to access this resource

## Training:

The [Supporting Indigenous Participation](#) workshop is designed to help sport and physical activity leaders and organizations across Canada enhance their understanding about how to support Indigenous participants and athletes in their programming. The workshop spends time developing an appreciation of Indigenous culture and describes how that culture plays out in terms of engagement and sustained participation through the sport system. It outlines the key elements that need to be considered when planning, developing, and implementing programs for and with Indigenous peoples and communities, including a focus on supporting the physical, mental, spiritual, and cultural needs of the individual to maximize their experience in sport and physical activity. The workshop will focus on how to adjust the competition pathway and some of the policies within the system to ensure a clearer pathway for Indigenous participants and athletes.

Upon completion of the workshop, participants will have:

- Increased cultural awareness and understanding about our shared history as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, through participation in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise;
- Increased understanding of the Indigenous and mainstream systems in Canada;
- Ideas to support participants' physical, mental (intellectual and emotional), spiritual, and cultural needs;



- Tools and an action plan to better support Indigenous participants in programs; and,
- A certificate of workshop completion and 3 National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP) Professional Development (PD) points (if applicable)

## Newcomers and New Canadians

Canada is seen as a welcoming, multicultural society and is a bilingual country. There are many organizations across Canada that have successfully reached out to newcomers and found ways to enable their participation in sport and physical activity. Although much has been done by local, provincial/territorial, and national organizations, few have included specific strategies for engagement and inclusion. Significantly more is needed from government, organizations, and our sport and physical activity leaders.

The resources below provide information on the importance of sport as a vehicle for inclusion, integration and belonging, and engagement strategies for newcomers and new Canadians as players, coaches, officials, and volunteers.

## Playing Together – New Citizens, Sports & Belonging

(Adopted from Institute for Canadian Citizenship)

**Playing Together – New Citizens, Sports & Belonging** developed by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), explores how new Canadian citizens participate in sports in Canada and the role that sports play in their integration and belonging. It provides recommendations on how Canada can better facilitate new citizens' participation in sports.

New citizens want to join, learn, play, and cheer. While integration may not be one of the primary reasons that they participate in sports in the first place, new citizens said sports helped them learn Canadian culture (Institute for Canadian Citizenship, 2014). Sports are safe places to meet other Canadians who share similar interests. On the field and in the locker room, new citizens learn the social norms of their new home, but there are barriers – largely structural – that keep some from participating at a more organized level. This resource tells the story of sports as an effective means to help new Canadians feel at home.

- [Playing Together – New Citizens, Sports & Belonging \(Full Report\)](#)
- [Playing Together – New Citizens, Sports & Belonging \(Infographic\)](#)
- [Playing Together – New Citizens, Sports & Belonging \(Summary Report\)](#)

## Sport for Life for All Newcomers to Canada: Creating Inclusion of Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity

(Adopted from Sport for Life Society)

Cities across Canada are being transformed by immigration. This trend will undoubtedly impact the Canadian sport and physical activity system. Grassroots and professional organizations need to find ways to appeal to this diverse new audience and it is the responsibility of all sport and physical activity leaders to ensure that the system is accessible to all Canadians. The [Sport for Life for All Newcomers to Canada:](#)



[Creating Inclusion of Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity](#) resource outlines the barriers that newcomers may face in their participation in sport and physical activity, and provides examples of solutions and opportunities that exist, as well as promising practices of work being done across Canada.

## Welcome to Canada: Engaging Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity

(Adopted from Sport for Life Society)

Newcomers to Canada require an individualized approach to enhance their own level of physical literacy through quality, stage-appropriate experiences. The [Welcome to Canada: Engaging Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity](#) e-learning course explores the barriers newcomers face to participation and solutions to address those barriers.

To take this training visit - <https://sportforlife-sportpouurlavie.ca/catalog.php>

## New Canadians and Sport: A Resource for Grassroots Sport

(Adopted from Ontario Soccer)

Over the course of 2 years (2011-2013), Ontario Soccer led an innovative array of soccer programs in collaboration with local groups and associations in the Ottawa area. The [New Canadians and Sport: A Resource for Grassroots Sport](#) was developed following the completion of this initiative and provides a summary of the programs and services delivered and lessons learned. As a result of the positive connections developed through this initiative, soccer clubs, community groups, and schools we were able to connect:

- New and experienced coaches and referees with clubs in their area, opening up many opportunities to develop their knowledge;
- Children with a professionally qualified coach in their school environment enabling them to experience, possibly for the first time, a properly delivered soccer session; and,
- Families with their local club through Community Day events.

The programs and narrative throughout this guide are designed to benefit sport leaders in creating a truly inclusive environment within clubs, associations, or communities and to inspire New Canadians through the stories of fellow New Canadians' success in Canada through their connection with the local soccer community.

## Making Healthy Connections with Racialized Communities: Girls and Youth Women's Experiences with Sport, Physical Activity, and Healthy Living

(Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport))

According to Sport Canada's 2005 [Sport Participation in Canada](#) report, minority girls and women are the most underrepresented in the Canadian sport and recreation system (Canadian Association for the



Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity, 2012). While Canada is officially a multicultural society in which all cultures are equally valued, policy and practice often fall short of this ideal. In the Ethnic Diversity Survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 2002, 20% of people aged 15 and over who were part of a racialized group felt that they had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment sometimes or often in the five years prior to the survey because of their ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent, or religion. The notion of multiculturalism is limiting, and does not examine the power dynamics involved in experiences of race and racism, explore how the processes of racialization and whiteness operate in the realms of sport, physical activity, and healthy living, nor does it reflect the lived experiences of the members of racialized communities.

[Making Healthy Connections with Racialized Communities: Girls and Young Women’s Experiences with Sport, Physical Activity, and Healthy Living](#) attempts to give a voice and address some of the issues confronted by racialized girls and young women as they pertain to sport, physical activity, and healthy living.

### Additional Resources:

- [Engaging Newcomer Girls & Women: Physical Activity & Sport Handbook](#)

## Blog – Newcomer, New Community, New Volunteer

[Adopted from Volunteer Canada]

Volunteering is a great way for newcomers to get to know their community, while learning about Canadian culture, practicing or learning skills, and meeting new people. Just like engaging volunteers from other cultures, there are factors unique to engaging recent immigrants. The blog post [Newcomer, New Community, New Volunteer](#) from Volunteer Canada explores how to make your organization more accessible to potential volunteers as well as strategies to ensure a positive volunteer experience.

## Women in Sport

[Adopted from the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport)]

To create a sport and physical activity system where all women and girls lead healthy lives and have opportunities to contribute in meaningful ways, it is necessary to embrace the importance of treating people equitably, rather than equally (refer to Section 4.2 for additional information on Gender Equity).

The powerful potential of sport and physical activity is undermined by intolerance of sexual and gender diversity, and homophobic and transphobic attitudes. Sexual and gender diversity refers to the full range of human sexual experience and gender identity and includes one’s perceived or actual sexual orientation as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered/ transitioned, queer or questioning, or heterosexual (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport), 2019). Taking steps to reduce intolerance, homophobia, and transphobia is consistent with Canada’s efforts to foster safe and welcoming environments in sport and physical activity, and with Canadian values of diversity, acceptance, and fairness.

## Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors



(Adopted from Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity [Canadian Women & Sport])

[Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors](#) is a supplement to the Canadian Sport for Life (CS4L) foundation documents, and compliments other Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) resources. It is a foundational resource that takes the LTAD model, passes it through the gender lens, and reveals many of the considerations that influence a girl's or woman's involvement in sport that are often not fully accounted for in the universal LTAD approaches or sport practice, which has been historically male dominated. The purpose of this resource is to increase awareness about the experiences of women and girls and provide recommendations to address the psycho-social factors that influence female athlete development, leadership, and life-long participation in sport and physical activity.

Women and girls, who account for more than 50 percent of the population of Canada, continue to be underrepresented in the sport and physical activity system (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity, 2012). Awareness about biomechanical and physiological considerations unique to women and girls has increased, providing a foundation to improve training methods and competition programs for athletes; however, large gaps persist in knowledge and practice relating to the psycho-social factors that influence women and girls as participants, athletes, coaches, officials, leaders, or administrators.

As a catalyst for change, CS4L offers an opportunity to address the recognized shortcomings of conventional sport and physical activity programming, and the LTAD framework, to adequately address gender differences. It is time to create optimal conditions and systems that support women and girls to be active at all stages of participation and competition, as coaches, officials, leaders, and in other roles related to sport and physical activity.

### Resources:

- [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Addressing the Psycho-Social Factors](#)
- [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Recommendations for Community Program Leaders and Coaches](#)
- [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Recommendations for High Performance Coaches and Leaders](#)
- [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: FUNdamental Stage Considerations](#)
- [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Learn to Train and Train to Train Stage Considerations](#)
- [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Train to Compete and Train to Win Stage Considerations](#)
- [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Active for Life Stage Considerations](#)

## Online Training – Keeping Girls in Sport

(Adopted from Respect Group, in partnership with Canadian Tire Jumpstart, the Coaching Association of Canada, and the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity [Canadian Women & Sport])

**Keeping Girls in Sport** was created to help everyone who coaches girls understand how girls develop physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally. When we understand how and why girls play, we can help every young athlete stay in sport, reach their potential, and remain active long after the competitions end, with a goal of becoming the next generation of inspiring female coaches and role models.

This online training includes the following elements:

- The Evolving Story of Girls in Sport



- Why Girls Aren't Participating in Sport and Activity
- Mechanic, Energetic and Relationship Injuries and Prevention
- How to Create Safe, Strong, Supportive Environments
- Why Girls Quit Sport
- Keeping Girls Healthy
- Key Themes for Keeping Girls in Sport
- Coaching Elements + Keeping Sport Fun and Engaging

Please use the following links to complete this training:

BC Soccer – <http://bcsoccer-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Alberta Soccer – <http://albertasoccer-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Saskatchewan Soccer – <http://sasksoccerkgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Manitoba Soccer Association – <http://soccermanitoba-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Ontario Soccer – <http://ontariosoccer-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Soccer Québec – <http://soccer-quebec-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Soccer New Brunswick – <http://soccernb-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Soccer Nova Scotia – <https://soccer-nova-scotia-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Prince Edward Island Soccer Association – <http://peisoccer-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Association – <http://nlsa-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Yukon Soccer Association – <http://yukonsoccer-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Northwest Territories Soccer Association – <http://nwtsoccer-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

Nunavut Soccer Association – <http://nunavutsoccer-kgis.respectgroupinc.com/>

## Women in Coaching and Positions of Leadership

While participation numbers of girls in soccer remain strong, the proportion of female leaders in Canadian sport is low. This small presence in relation to males in comparable roles may impact girl's and women's sport participation. Several studies have addressed the drivers of this gender imbalance in sport leadership, reporting that it is influenced largely by social factors with women facing gender discrimination as they progress in leadership and coaching roles (Drago, Hennighausen, Rogers, Vescio, & Stauffer, Pennsylvania State University). A 2010 study found that men were more than twice as likely as women to coach (6.5% of the male population as compared to only 3.0% of females) and only 25% of registered coaches and officials were female across all sport (Statistics Canada, 2013). For more information on the gender gap, refer to [Women in Sport: Fueling a Lifetime of Participation – A Report on the Status of Female Sport Participation in Canada](#).

For these reasons, women in coaching, officiating, and positions of leadership is a key focus of accessibility and inclusion within Canadian soccer.



## Gender Equity Self-Assessment Tool for Sport Clubs and Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations

(Adopted from Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport))

The [Gender Equity Self-Assessment Tool for Sport Clubs and Provincial/Territorial Sport Organizations](#) is a practical tool designed to help sport and physical activity organizations assess whether their programs, services, and facilities meet a satisfactory standard of gender equity. Results will help organizations identify areas where they can focus their efforts to strengthen their engagement of women and girls as participants and leaders.

This is a reflection tool that is often useful for generating insight on areas that could be worked on to create more equitable environments and programs for women and girls. It is a great starting point for identifying specific changes or initiatives to prioritize.

## Female Coach Mentorship

(Adopted from Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) and Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport))

The Female Coach Mentorship Model is the outcome of a two-year pilot project aimed at developing a sustainable model of mentorship for female coaches who are interested in enhancing their skill set and optimizing their potential. There has been a mentorship guide developed specifically for each of the mentee, mentor, and sport administrator, which are intended to serve as a resource to enhance the advancement of women in coaching.

Resources:

- [Effective Mentoring Practices for the Sport Administrator](#)
- [Effective Mentoring Practices for the Mentor](#)
- [Effective Mentoring Practices for the Mentee](#)

## Women and Leadership

(Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport))

Research indicates that diverse boards are more innovative, more accountable, and manage risk more effectively and that organizations with the most gender diversity outperform those with the least (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport), 2019). Gender equity is key to achieving a world class sport system. Working towards gender balance in sport leadership has the potential to help mitigate critical risks sport organizations face today, whether in terms of safe sport, financial sustainability, or effective governance.

Progress is being made by Canada's National Sport Organizations (NSOs) and Multisport Service Organizations (MSOs), yet women continue to be underrepresented in key leadership roles as presented in the [Women in Sport Leadership: 2020 Snapshot](#).

In support of Sport Canada's objective of achieving gender equity in sport at all levels by 2035, Canadian Women & Sport has developed [The Leading Edge: Good Practices for Creating Gender-Equitable Boards](#)



[in Sport](#). This resource provides sport leaders with information and tips to enhance good practices or increase efforts to support gender-equitable boards.

## Actively Engaging Women and Girls: The Three R's of Leadership Development for Women in Sport

(Adopted from Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport))

Engaging more women as leaders is critical if Canada is to be successful as a world-leading sport nation. Other sectors are stepping up when it comes to actively engaging more women in leadership positions, and research clearly demonstrates the benefit in terms of innovation, governance and performance (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity, 2014).

Knowing we need more women in leadership positions in Canada's sport and physical activity sector is one thing; getting and keeping them is another. The [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: The Three R's of Leadership Development for Women in Sport](#) resource will help organizations create a deliberate path to long-term leadership development. From community clubs to national multi-sport organizations, these concepts can be applied to intentionally cultivate a welcoming and rewarding environment for women leaders.

## LGBTQI2S

### Leading the Way: Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches – A Practical Resource for Coaches

(Adopted from Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport))

**Leading the Way: Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches** is a comprehensive resource designed for coaches and is based on the lived experiences of Canadian athletes and coaches.

The resource highlights current issues in Canadian sport and aims to make sport a more welcoming place for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (transgender), two-spirited, queer or questioning (LGBTQ). **Leading the Way** provides information to help coaches understand LGBTQ phobia and the negative impact it has on everyone in their sport. It suggests best practices for creating a sport environment that is safe and respectful for all.

#### Resources:

- [Leading the Way: Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches – A Practical Resource for Coaches](#)
- [Leading the Way: Working with LGBTQ Athletes and Coaches – A Practical Resource for Coaches – Executive Summary](#)



## Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Recommendations to Make Sport and Physical Activity More Welcoming to Sexual and Gender Diversity

[Adopted from Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport)]

Taking steps to reduce intolerance, homophobia and transphobia is consistent with Canada's efforts to foster safe and welcoming environments in sport and physical activity, and with Canadian values of diversity, acceptance, and fairness.

The [Actively Engaging Women and Girls: Recommendations to Make Sport and Physical Activity More Welcoming to Sexual and Gender Diversity](#) resource presents actions to make sport and physical activity environments more welcoming to sexual and gender diversity.

## Transgender Inclusion

[Adopted from Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) and Saskatchewan Soccer]

One in two hundred Canadian adults identify as transgender (Individuals who identify as transgender are born with unique combinations of gender and sex as a part of their identity). This equates to 175,000 Canadians. Other Canadians identify on a spectrum of gender that does not align to gender binary. Transgender athletes have found the sport community to be exclusionary and discriminatory due to strictly enforced binary rules of men and/or women's sports teams. In fact, in a 2014 landmark case, the Ontario Human Rights Legal Support Centre and a youth ice hockey player negotiated a settlement requiring Hockey Canada to allow all players in Ontario to use locker rooms that match their self-identified gender identity, review, and revise its procedures to protect privacy around players' transgender status, and provide training to all Ontario coaches on gender identity and related discrimination and harassment.

As our society evolves, it is necessary that we gain a greater knowledge and understanding of diverse gender identities and expressions. By doing so, it will allow our society to meaningfully include these individuals in not only sport, but in everyday life. To create a positive environment for transgender athletes we must create an inclusive environment which adapts the sport to fit the need of the individual, not isolate an individual who doesn't fit the standard assumptions of gender and sex norms.

## Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport

[Adopted from Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES)]

Canadian sport organizations consistently work to adapt and improve their policies and practices. In recent years, there has been an increasing number of transgender participants choosing to participate in sport at all levels, as well as organizations that are proactively making their policies more inclusive in anticipation of transgender participants.



The [Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport – Guidance for Sport Organizations](#) was developed by the Trans Inclusion Sport Expert Working Group and is designed to assist individuals and organizations to better understand experiences of trans people, what practices should be adopted to respect the rights of trans participants in their sport, and what the key policy considerations and recommendations are to make their sport more inclusive to gender diverse individuals.

The Guidance for Sport Organizations resource has been well received within the Canadian sport community, but Canadian sport leaders have asked for further guidance on what an inclusive policy document should contain, including best practices. To that effect, the CCES has developed the [Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport Policy and Practice Template for Sport Organizations](#) resource. This template is designed to help sport organizations create their own policy and practice guidance on trans inclusion, from athletes to volunteers to paid staff. It identifies the key aspects a policy should include, the associated rationale or considerations, and provides a sample policy and practice guidance as an example.

## Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants Guidance Document

(Adopted from Saskatchewan Soccer)

In support of the CCES guiding document [Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants in Canadian Sport – Guidance for Sport Organizations](#), the Saskatchewan Soccer’s [Creating Inclusive Environments for Trans Participants Guidance Document](#) is designed specifically to support soccer organizations to become more trans-inclusive by providing guidance on principles for developing policies and practices.

For a supporting Confidentiality Statement and Dressing Room Policy template and implementation guide developed by the Ontario Hockey Federation but adaptable to soccer organizations, please refer to Section 4.3.

## Sexual Orientation

(Adopted from Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity)

New data show that homophobia is still alive and well in Canadian sports (Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport), 2019). The study, which is the first of its kind, suggests anti-gay attitudes are deterring young people from being active in some athletic fields.

The survey, called Out on the Fields, was conducted online in six English-speaking countries — U.S., U.K., Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and Australia — and promoted through a coalition of sporting organizations. Of the 9,500 participants, 75 per cent were LGBT. The data show that 81% of the Canadians surveyed witnessed or experienced homophobia in sports, while 84% of gay men and 88% of lesbians polled faced slurs in sports. In addition, 86% of Canadian gay youth and 89% of lesbian youth responded that they were not open about their sexuality with their teammates. Of the Canadian participants, 66% said they would feel unsafe in spectator areas if they were open about their sexuality.

Addressing the issue of homophobia in sport is very timely given Canada’s inclusive stance on minority rights as well as the Canadian sport system’s overall strategy of making the sport environment, and the sport experience, safe and welcoming.



## A Position Paper on Homophobia in Sport

(Adopted from Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity [Canadian Women & Sport])

Canadian Women & Sport has prepared [A Position Paper on Homophobia in Sport](#) to initiate a discussion about homophobia in sport. The position paper is a first step in a longer-term strategy to reduce homophobia in Canadian sport and to make sport an inclusive and safe place for all participants. This paper is not intended to provide an answer to the problem of homophobia in sport, but to start a discussion that will hopefully lead to future solutions.

## Mental Health

(Adopted from Mental Health Commission of Canada)

Mental health is different from the absence of mental illness and is integral to our overall health. Mental health is a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to their own community.

Good mental health buffers us from the stresses and hardships that are part of life for us all and can help to reduce the risk of developing mental health conditions. Even when someone develops a mental health condition, they can nevertheless experience good mental health, and this can contribute to their journey of recovery. There are many kinds of mental health conditions. They range from more common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression to less common conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Mental health concerns us all. One in five Canadians will experience a mental health condition every year, with a cost of well over \$50 billion to our economy. And many people either don't seek or can't get the services and supports they need to recover a meaningful life.

Released in May 2012, [Changing Directions, Changing Lives](#), is the first mental health strategy for Canada. It aims to help improve the mental health and well-being of all people living in Canada, and to create a mental health system that can truly meet the needs of people living with mental health conditions and their families.

In addition to a pan-Canadian mental health strategy, numerous resources and trainings are available to support the mental health of participants in soccer organizations.

## Resources – Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) leads the development and dissemination of innovative programs and tools to support the mental health and wellness of Canadians. Through its unique mandate from the Government of Canada, the MHCC supports federal, provincial, and territorial governments as well as organizations in the implementation of sound public policy.

For general resources provided by the MHCC, visit <https://www.mhfa.ca/en/general-resources>.



## Resources – Expand the Reach

Research shows that 1 in 5 children have a mental health condition, and that early diagnosis and treatment lead to better outcomes for children later in life and decrease involvement in youth justice system (New Path Youth & Family Services, 2019). New Path Youth & Family Services, with the support of Morton Youth Services and coaches, developed [Expand the Reach](#). Expand the Reach has a mission to support coaches and provide them with the necessary tools to assist with the identification of behaviours that may indicate mental health conditions.

Community-based activity groups provide many benefits to youth, and act as a protective and preventative factor for many. The coach/athlete relationship is often one of the most significant relationships in a young person's life.

## Training – HIGH FIVE Healthy Minds for Healthy Children

[HIGH FIVE® Healthy Minds for Healthy Children](#) is an online training and downloadable resource to help those working with children positively influence their mental health. This training offers engagement strategies for nurturing resiliency in children and provides insights into common mental health distress or disorders that children could be experiencing.

At the completion of this training, learners will be able to:

- Use engagement strategies with children who may be suffering from mental health conditions;
- Use a Strength Based Decision Making Model to engage children; and,
- Communicate with children and parents about sensitive topics

## Training – HIGH FIVE Strengthening Children's Mental Health

[HIGH FIVE Strengthening Children's Mental Health](#) is a one-day in-person training designed to help anyone running children's programs be more informed and prepared to support their staff in promoting positive mental health in children. Participants will learn key concepts and factors that affect children's mental health including the impact of stress and environment on a child's ability to cope. This training will provide tools and suggested activities to use with staff to help improve their understanding and interactions with children who face challenges in their programs.

At the completion of this training, learners will be able to identify key concepts related to children's mental health, as well as strategies to help staff promote positive mental health and respond appropriately to children with challenges and/or mental health conditions.

## Training – Mental Health First Aid Canada

[Mental Health First Aid for Adults who Interact with Youth](#) is intended for an adult audience whose primary focus is youth (aged 14-25 years). In addition to the four most common mental health disorders, including substance related, mood related, anxiety and trauma related, and psychotic disorders (Mental



Health Commission of Canada, 2019), this course includes instruction about eating disorders and deliberate self-injury. Participants who take this course are well prepared to interact confidently about mental health with the young people in their lives, including at schools, extra-curricular activities, social services, family, friends, and communities.

## Religion

(Adapted from [Play by the Rules](#))

The relationship between sports and religion can sometimes be challenging, but as with other considerations for creating accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environments, organizations should adapt their practices and programs to consider different religious beliefs. While sport can be a positive vehicle to overcome religious intolerance, insensitivities to accommodating religious diversity may discourage people from taking part in sport.

Insensitivities and areas of accommodation may include but is not limited to:

- training or playing days that conflict with religious observation;
- not providing a place or appropriate environment for observation or prayer;
- fasting and perceived effects on performance;
- other dietary requirements;
- conforming to a dress code;
- providing only communal change rooms;
- gender mixing at practices, games, and/or team transport; and/or,
- tolerance or appropriateness of sponsors or advertising logos on team uniforms that contradict religious observation (e.g. gambling, loan companies, alcohol)

One area that is still evolving is the inclusion of certain people or lifestyles that other people claim to find offensive based on religion. There is a difference between faith-based practices (e.g., wearing clothing or praying) and expressing faith-based views related to others (e.g., expressing disapproval of homosexuality), the latter of which would be deemed unacceptable within the sporting environment (Play by the Rules, 2019).

While the issue of inclusion of certain people or lifestyles that other people claim to find offensive based on religion remains fluid, there are still many steps that sports can take to create a more tolerant, encouraging, and accommodating environment for people with different religious beliefs.

Examples include:

- setting aside a quiet, demarcated space as a prayer area or religious observation area;
- allowing players to take breaks during practice for religious observation;
- creating set time for single gender practices or “closed to public” matches;
- accommodating dress codes in team uniforms; and/or
- making wet towels available for fasting players to cool down on hot game days when they are unable to drink water.

Experts have noted that it is important that any adaptations to accommodate different religious perspectives should not erode the trust and cooperation of other religious or cultural groups with the sport. The other groups should be included or consulted on any organizational policy development so that they are educated and not alienated from the process.



A good first step is to be educated about different religions and their beliefs. Try the Play by the Rules Interactive Scenario on Religious Inclusion that contains several resources that can help and guides you through a very typical scenario - <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/interactive-scenarios/religious-inclusion>

## Financial Barriers to Participation

(Adapted from Canadian Parks and Recreation Association)

Quality recreational opportunities are vital to the health and personal development of all children and youth. The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA), through its members, partners, and allied organizations have made a commitment to make recreation more accessible to families with low-income and their children in Canada. The CPRA's position paper [Everybody Gets to Play™ - Recreation Without Barriers](#) endorses the research that clearly demonstrates that recreation interventions are an effective and economical strategy to improve the lives of low-income families and their children.

In Canada, almost one in six or 1.1 million young children live in poverty. Research indicates that poverty hampers the development of healthy children. They are often born with low birth weights, are prone to hyperactivity, and are twice as likely to drop out before finishing high school. The face of poverty differs from region to region and community to community.

Although all children and youth have the right to engage in play and recreation opportunities, the social and systemic barriers faced by children and youth in families with low-income means the population that could most benefit from participation are the least likely to participate. Statistics show that children in low-income families are much less likely than children living in high-income families to participate in organized sports (25 percent as compared to 75 percent), as well as arts, and cultural activities (19 percent as compared to 32 percent). A national survey of 167 municipal recreation facilities revealed that over 90 percent charge user fees for aquatics, athletics, and arts programs.

Low-income families face many barriers that prevent their children from participating in quality recreation programs, including: User fees and equipment costs; lack of transportation, family support, and awareness of opportunities; isolation; inadequate or no facilities in their communities; and, lack of safe places to play.

Although developed for recreation, the position paper is equally relevant to sport. In support of reducing barriers to participation, the CPRA has developed a list of what communities and municipalities can do, which can be applied equally well by soccer organizations:

## Learn about poverty in your area

- Research local poverty conditions (i.e., compile census data and existing research, ask key informants and get information directly from people living in poverty).
- Examine what possible barriers may exist in your community that may prevent low-income families from accessing recreation.
- Examine your personal assumptions and organizational values as they relate to poverty issues.
- Find out what other recreation programs are offered in your community and who delivers them.
- Determine where gaps in recreation services exist.
- Take inventory of the poverty-related organizations and community groups in your area.



## Partner with others – people living in poverty and community organizations

- Ask people living in poverty about what can be done to improve recreation access.
- Identify and establish partnerships with other agencies in your community (i.e. Provincial/Territorial ministries responsible for children and families; Community Schools, RCMP/municipal police; school districts; health authority, etc.).
- Work with school districts to provide community-use of school facilities for conveniently located and accessible recreation.
- Work with principals and teachers to link low-income children to recreation (i.e., share information, encourage participation, and provide positive alternatives for kids in need).
- Work with multi-sectoral partners to:
  - create community awareness about the importance of recreation for everybody
  - create awareness about barriers faced by low-income families;
  - strategize about how to resolve issues together;
  - establish pilot activities to test and evaluate strategies; and
  - create programs with long-term sustainability.
- Facilitate and support research about poverty and the benefits of access to recreation for everyone.

## Advocate for issues and secure sustainable funding

- Educate elected municipal officials about why recreation is important for everybody including low-income families and their children.
- Create awareness about poverty and the importance of access to recreation for everyone, utilizing publications such as program brochures to educate the community.
- Share success stories with other local communities as well as your provincial/territorial and national associations.
- Communicate with Federal-Provincial/Territorial MP's about the positive impact and benefits of recreation for all children and youth. Encourage them to support goals and objectives of improving access.
- Encourage municipal and provincial/territorial governments to provide sustainable funding for programs and services that open doors for low-income families and their children.
- When elections are called, ask federal, provincial/territorial and municipal candidates for their position on programs and services for low-income families.
- Advocate for the right of each child/youth to develop their potential through access to recreation.

## Policies

- Develop access policies that:
  - acknowledge the benefits of recreation for low-income families and their children;
  - reduce financial barriers to participation;
  - ensure confidentiality; and,
  - maintain the dignity low-income families (i.e., avoid intrusive questions and a prerequisite that forces participants to prove financial need).
- Test, evaluate, and revise policies and practices as needed over time and as new information becomes available.



## Create accessible programs

- Research, develop, and test free/low-cost programs.
- Conduct in-service training with staff/volunteers to increase sensitivity within your organizational culture. Explore what it means for people in your community to live in poverty and the barriers to participation in recreation services. Strategize together about ways to improve service.
- Plan activities that provide transportation or are accessible by public transit.
- Youth are very interested in jobs! Provide youth from low-income families with sport and recreation skills such as coaching and officiating (e.g. NCCP and sport-specific coaching workshops, refereeing workshops, etc.) in conjunction with leadership training at no charge, so these youth will have the skills and qualifications needed to access recreation jobs.
- Youth need time to gain the skills, experience, and qualifications to apply for jobs. Work with social assistance offices, schools, and other youth employment organizations to introduce leadership training and employment opportunities to youth in advance of hiring processes. In this way, youth can have the chance to volunteer, sign up for a leadership course, and/or take a certification program well in advance of the date when applications are due.

In addition to the strategies outlined above, organizations should have programs, partnerships, and/or other mechanisms to reduce barriers to participation. This should include partnerships and information about KidSport and JumpStart funding (see below) as well as any additional sources of funding in your area and may also include an internal financial support program.

## KidSport

KidSport is a national not-for-profit organization that provides financial assistance for registration fees and equipment to kids aged 18 and under. Through a confidential application process, they provide grants so kids can play a season of sport. Nationally, KidSport is comprised of a network of 11 provincial/territorial KidSport chapters and 166 community KidSport chapters. Since its creation in 1993, over 750,000 kids across the country have been given the chance to play sport through KidSport grants and sport introduction programming.

For more information on KidSport visit [www.kidsportcanada.ca](http://www.kidsportcanada.ca)

## JumpStart

Founded in 2005, Jumpstart Charities helps kids overcome financial and accessibility barriers to sport and recreation to provide inclusive play for kids of all abilities. Jumpstart is more than just about getting kids active. It's about giving kids from families in financial need the same chance to participate as their neighbours, their classmates, and their friends. Whether it's the chance to try a new sport or to continue with a favourite one, no kid should be left out.

For more information on JumpStart visit <https://jumpstart.canadiantire.ca>



## SECTION III: What Can We Do to Improve?

In addition to the information and numerous ideas and resources provided in previous sections and the associated training, tools, templates, and resources, please find below a general step-by-step approach to how organizations can improve accessibility and inclusion .

### Step 1: Hold yourself accountable

- Take an Implicit Bias Test - <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/langchoice/canada.html>
- Challenge your assumptions
- Justify your decisions
- Be inclusive

### Step 2: Hold others accountable

- Create a culture of calling out unconscious bias
- Make others justify decisions
- Make decisions collectively
- Have conversations about unconscious bias, accessibility, and inclusion

### Step 3: Be Involved

- Educate yourself
- Be a mentor
- Be an ally
- Listen
- Advocate for others

## Preventing Bias Every Day

Once we understand our unconscious biases, here are some ideas on how organizations can create and ensure more accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environments that are practical and easy to use.

- Use good hiring practices for both paid and volunteer positions
- Have a code of conduct posted and provide training on it
- Discuss professionalism, accessibility, and inclusion within your organization
- Once per season, have a staff meeting or workshop focused on accessibility and inclusion initiatives
- Ensure ideas from underrepresented groups are heard and actively promote them
- Ensure underrepresented groups can participate in your organization
- Be inclusive (food, time of activities, type of activity, etc.)
- Have flexible work and programming hours
- Promote people from underrepresented groups (invite to speak, suggest for awards, etc.)
- Write gender neutral reference letters – pay attention to emotional language
- Refer to the candidate as M. Saxena and they/them to be gender-neutral
- Give helpful feedback to others on the use of inclusive language, actions, and activities
- Be an ally



## SECTION IV: Additional Resources

### 4.1 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) published its final report detailing the experiences and impacts of the residential school system, creating a historical record of its legacy and consequences. It is important to recognize the historical and ongoing wrongs perpetrated against Indigenous peoples and the legacy of colonialism still in place today (Government of British Columbia, 2019).

The legacy of that separation and suppression of culture has had a profoundly negative impact on Indigenous communities, families, and cultural connections through generations.

The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#) are an appeal to mobilize all levels of government, organizations, as well as individuals to make concrete changes to society. They list specific actions to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Canada, 2015). Several Calls to Action speak directly to sport, including:

87. We call upon all levels of government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, sports halls of fame, and other relevant organizations, to provide public education that tells the national story of Aboriginal athletes in history.
88. We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel.
89. We call upon the federal government to amend the Physical Activity and Sport Act to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.
90. We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to, establishing:
  - i. In collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs that reflect the diverse cultures and traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal peoples.
  - ii. An elite athlete development program for Aboriginal athletes.
  - iii. Programs for coaches, trainers, and sports officials that are culturally relevant for Aboriginal peoples.
  - iv. Anti-racism awareness and training programs
91. We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.

Within those Calls to Action, the ability to take action to ensure long-term Indigenous participant development and growth, reduction of barriers to sports participation, building capacity in the Canadian sport system, and inclusion of Indigenous peoples in the development of sports policies, programs, and initiatives, are important engagement elements.



## 4.2 Gender Equity (adopted from the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (Canadian Women & Sport))

Gender Equity is the process of allocating resources, programs and decision-making fairly to both males and females. This requires ensuring that everyone has access to a full range of opportunities to achieve the social, psychological, and physical benefits that come from participating and leading in sport and physical activity. It does not necessarily mean making the same programs and facilities available to both males and females. Gender equity requires that girls and women be provided with a full range of activity and program choices that meet their needs, interests, and experiences; therefore, some activities may be the same as those offered to boys and men, some may be altered, and some may be altogether different. Human rights legislation, including the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, has affirmed the principles of equity while making provisions for affirmative action programs to eliminate disadvantages.

Gender Equity also requires an examination of organizational practices and policies that may hinder the participation of girls and women. For example, this requires service providers to assess:

- Hiring and recruitment practices – to ensure women have leadership roles, are involved in decision-making, and are available as role models for other girls and women;
- Resource allocation – to determine how budgets are allocated across programs;
- Facility bookings – to ensure that both females and males have access to prime-time slots and prime facilities;
- Participation rates – to evaluate current programs and services to identify potential barriers, and to determine whether co-ed programs are truly co-ed;
- Activity programming – to assess the types of activities offered for males and females; and
- Promotional materials – to ensure girls and women are not being excluded or stereotyped in pictures or language.

Positive initiatives that target specific groups are important because they take into account years of socialization and historical traditions that have created imbalances, subsequently marginalizing sectors of the population because these conditions are accepted as the norm.

### Equality vs. Equity

There is sometimes confusion about the difference between the concepts of equality and equity. Usage often depends on the sector and country in question. In Canada, in the sport and physical activity system, the use of gender equity is most common.

In contrast to equity, gender equality is the process of allocating resources, programs and decision making so that males and females have the same (e.g., females and males would each receive 50% of the resources, facilities, and each have access to the same programs. e.g., if there was a male program, there would also be a female program). While the goal of treating everyone the same may seem noble, the principle of equal treatment tends to ignore the fact that people differ in their capacities, interests, resources, and experiences.

Equality focuses on creating the same starting line for everyone. Equity has the goal of providing everyone with the full range of opportunities and benefits – the same finish line.



## The Benefits of Gender Equity

Organizations have much to gain by committing themselves to achieving gender equity:

- Attracting more girls and women to sport and physical activity enhances the revenue base and increases the market segment to which the sport appeals.
- Fully representing the population base and tapping the resources of every member results in a larger, stronger, and more effective organization.
- Skilled women provide the organization with an important talent pool of administrators, coaches, and officials.
- Changing the image of women in sport attracts public interest and private investment. In turn, more members are attracted to the organization.
- Taking the lead in promoting girls and women brings prestige and support to the organization.
- Working together, women and men can learn to build equal partnerships.
- Providing opportunities for mothers and daughters to get involved can enhance both the chosen sport or activity, and family relationships.
- Sport and physical activity can provide opportunities for girls to understand and respect their bodies which in turn helps them to deal with health issues such as eating disorders and smoking.
- By fulfilling their legal responsibility to treat everyone involved in the organization fairly and making a commitment to gender equity, organizations avoid a negative public image as well as the time and expense of dealing with unnecessary lawsuits.



## 4.3 Trans Inclusive Policy Templates and Implementation Guides (Adopted from Ontario Hockey Federation)

Confidentiality Statement Template (Ontario Hockey Federation)

Confidentiality Statement Implementation Guide (Ontario Hockey Federation)

Dressing Room Policy (Ontario Hockey Federation)

Dressing Room Policy Implementation Guide (Ontario Hockey Federation)



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