

SUMMARY REPORT

Canadian Sport Policy Renewal

Round Table on Sport and Ethno-cultural Populations

Sport Canada

Toronto, Ontario – August 16, 2011

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
CONTEXT	3
GENERAL QUESTIONS.....	3
Importance of Sport.....	3
Challenges and Solutions	5
Priorities.....	10
CONCLUSION.....	10
ROUND TABLE PARTICIPANTS	11

The views expressed herein are those raised by the participants at the meeting and do not necessarily reflect those of Sport Canada or the Government of Canada.

Introduction

Certain segments of the population face challenges related to their ability to participate in sport and, once involved, to their ability to successfully pursue the opportunities that exist within sport. In the process to renew the Canadian Sport Policy (CSP), Sport Canada hosted round tables to capture the policy issues specific to sport for women and girls, persons with a disability, Aboriginal Peoples, and Canada's increasing diverse ethno-cultural communities.

Sport Canada worked with leaders within each population to identify eight to 10 representatives for each round table with the requisite knowledge and experience to contribute to the discussion. It was explained to participants that, although they may have participated in other CSP consultations or completed the online survey, the purpose of the round table was to focus on the issues specific to their population that they believed needed to be considered in the development of the next iteration of the CSP. This report outlines the results of the round table on sport for ethno-cultural populations hosted in Toronto on August 16, 2011. The participants are listed at the end of this report.

Context

Time was spent at the beginning of the round table having each participant introduce themselves and tell the group about the organization for which they worked and the nature of the work they do. This was followed by a brief overview of the evolution of the Canadian Sport Policy, the role that it plays in Canadian sport, and the current process to renew it. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period where participants asked questions about the sport system and the role of the various players, especially Sport Canada, in the system. The discussion confirmed current understanding that those working primarily at the community level are not aware of the Canadian Sport Policy and have little or no knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the various provincial/territorial and national organizations within the Canadian sport system.

General Questions

Participants were provided with the following general questions designed to stimulate feedback on the renewal of the CSP.

Importance of Sport

1. Why is it important to promote and encourage Canada's diverse ethno-cultural populations to participate in sport?

This question was answered in two parts:

- (A) How can sport benefit ethno-cultural communities?

- Active health - a way for people to be more physically active.
- It is a way to introduce newcomers to Canada.
- Build a better community – e.g., fewer youth on street, eat better, better focus, self-confidence, self-esteem, academic achievement
- Building a sense of community/neighbourhood pride. Sport can act as a common language. It provides a shared topic of discussion with others at work and in the community, e.g., everyone can talk about last night’s game
- As the population ages and the ethno-cultural population ages, there is a role to play in re-engaging seniors and pre-seniors into sport – for social and health reasons, health. Participation will decline and some sports risk disappearing if we don’t re-engage people.

(B) What can ethno-cultural community involvement in sport bring to the sport system?

- There is a larger pool of participants to draw from to select high performance athletes.
- Introduction of ethnic-specific sports to Canada (e.g., Kendo).
- Introducing new approaches to existing sports, e.g., yoga is now used to improve golf swings. This new way of “doing sport” can contribute to a higher level of excellence for athletes.
- It’s a great way to find volunteers. Newcomers are a source of volunteers.
- Traditional leagues are losing participants, so attracting newcomers can at least stabilize and keep the strength of league up. Birth rates are low and immigration rates are higher. Attracting ethno-cultural communities keeps facilities and programs viable.
- Facilities become more engaging as a result of input from diverse populations, e.g., Modesty curtains added in a swimming pool for Muslim women also benefitted visually impaired swimmers by blocking the sun glare
- Some communities can provide support for sport facilities.
- It sensitizes organizations to make their programs more accessible.
- It makes facilities, fields, and neighbourhoods safer – because everyone is involved. It builds a sense of ownership and increases likelihood that the community will care for the resources.
- It influences a change in the culture of sport to one more reflective of the diverse environment in which it exists. When there is a greater diversity of participation – when that diversity becomes the norm – there is a shift in the perception of what a “Canadian” looks like - a shift away from whiteness. When there is greater participation by all diverse populations, there is greater opportunity to make Canadian identity more inclusive and more flexible. The athletes that represent Canada are what we think of as “Canadian.” Because sport is tied to citizenship, it’s a way for the paradigm of “whiteness = Canadian” to shift to better reflect the reality of Canada’s changing demographics.
- It fosters community building by strengthening a sense of belonging and contributing to society.
- It helps reduce the unemployment rate, e.g., hire referees, and helps stimulate the economy (e.g., rent space, fees, tournaments, travel)

- Network of immigrants helps increase participation in traditional Canadian sports. More participation leads to increased funding for sport.
- Creates new vision of excellence in sport – e.g., coaches from foreign countries may have different approaches and techniques which can benefit Canadian coaches.

Challenges and Solutions

2. What are the most important challenges affecting efforts to promote and increase the participation of Canada's diverse ethno-cultural populations in sport?

Each participant identified four challenges. Each challenge was recorded on an index card and put up on the wall. Collectively the group reviewed the challenges, collapsed or combined those which were similar, organized them into common groups, and developed a title that aptly described each group. Participants were also given an opportunity to add other challenges that they felt were missing before moving to Question 3.

3. Now that we have identified a number of issues, let's go over each one and discuss them in more detail:
 - Who is affected by this issue?
 - How are they affected by it?
 - What can be done to address this issue?
 - Who has responsibility for doing what needs to be done?

Below are the groups that emerged from Question 2 combined with the information that was gleaned from the discussion on Question 3. Unfortunately time did not permit all four parts of Question 3 to be addressed.

A. FACILITIES

Description of issue:

- insufficient or inadequate facilities
 - o aging infrastructure – need funding to upgrade
 - o the bottom line at the community level: if there is no space to play, people are not going to play
 - o facilities are not adapted to the needs of newcomers
 - o need more gyms, more playing fields
- access to facilities
 - o new organizations are on the waiting list to use the facilities
 - o use of facilities is based on tradition – certain leagues always play at the same facility and it is hard for newcomers to gain access
 - o political decisions influence facility access as opposed to responding to community needs

Solutions:

- better use of school facilities
- someone needs to be accountable for ensuring that use of space is adjusted to the demands of all the community
- demographic audit of facilities – are people playing? who is playing? What are the demographics?
- Adapt other best practices (e.g., gender equity as a priority – proportionate allotment of arenas for teams of both genders)

B. KNOWLEDGE

Description of issue:

- need to introduce newcomers to Canadian sport (“bridging” individual to sport)
 - o many sports practiced in Canada are foreign to newcomers, especially winter sports
 - o need orientation to the basics – where and how sport is practiced (schools, municipal, clubs, etc. – registration process, cost, transportation, rules, etc.)
 - o need to explain to parents the benefits of involvement in sport in Canadian context and in their kids’ lives (not a given in some cultures)
- Lack of proper advertisement for existing programs (language is often a barrier)
- Lack of on-going data collection on participation of ethno-cultural groups in sport to get a baseline understanding and to see, over time, if improvements have been made

Solutions:

- Need to make people aware of existing opportunities, need better outreach (be more creative about getting the word out)
- Need culturally sensitive initiation programs to introduce newcomers to the sport and not expect them to understand the sport right away
- Use community media to promote sport or recreation opportunities
- Need to post contact information for clubs or community programs at sports venues
- Educate parents about how having a well-rounded kid (with academics, sports, and music) will provide them a better chance to adapt and succeed in their new environment
- Settlement agencies could be another conduit for information on sports and recreation, and to promote the value of sport
- Have value of sport introduced during orientation to school. School system is a vital conduit to get info to newcomer families.
- Better leadership and coordination at the community level to promote sport (lots of organizations promote their own agenda, instead of promoting sport in general within the community)
- Put in place mechanisms to better understand the participation of ethno-cultural populations in sport. Make use of existing reports, e.g., by Dr. Peter Donnelly, that provide recommendations on how this data could be collected

C. VALUE OF SPORT

Description of issue:

- lack of parental cooperation – do not value sport involvement (emphasis on academics instead, sometimes can be a gender issue)
- absence of a culture of volunteering for many newcomer communities (working is a priority, frequently more than one job)

Solutions:

- need to emphasize the value of sport for youth and the importance of supporting youth sport programs

D. LACK OF SPORT ORGANIZATION CAPACITY (INCLUDING COACHING PROFICIENCY) AND COMMITMENT

Description of issue:

- Lack of commitment to engage newcomers or lack of capacity to do so
- Lack of capacity among provincial sport organizations and clubs
 - lack of human resources with full understanding of cultural considerations (the right people to relate to the newcomer community)
 - lack of diverse representation on boards of sport organizations
- Lack of transfer of sport knowledge to participants
- Lack of common voice for multicultural communities at the national level
- Coaching proficiency
 - lack of commitment to culturally competent sport coaching (cultural sensitivity is barely touched upon in coaches training – uneasiness to talk about it)
- Lack of culturally competent sports infrastructure
 - Limited cultural competency (lack of awareness or respect with respect to dietary or religious considerations) in clubs, at the municipal level, on boards, and amongst coaches
 - There is uneasiness to talk about this gap

Solutions:

- Need more sensitizing material, certifications for coaches to learn about cross-cultural issues
- Offer courses for coaches at no cost, convenient locations, convenient for their time, easy transportation
- Do more online training, webinar, website certifications, think outside the box in how we deliver certification programs
- Offer courses in more languages
- Offer certifications for more than just mainstream sports

- Share resource amongst coaches/small clubs, not competing with one another but working together to access the available resources. Collaboration - if one gets a certification, he/she should share that knowledge with others
- Community colleges can provide training to be on boards
- Integrate cultural competency and running a sports club into coach training – should be part of minimum standards
- Find a carrot for community volunteers – certificate of appreciation – from government or sports club? – volunteer recognition (at all levels from recreational level to high performance)
- Need ethno-cultural representation on awards committee on the sports club board
- Perhaps increasing ethno-cultural participation could be tied to Sport Canada’s Sport Funding and Accountability Framework requirements – funding criteria?
 - all solutions don’t necessarily require money – we need to be creative and resourceful (e.g., homeless sport league)
- Have a “Right to Play” type of advocacy group at the national level to advocate for inclusion, “Own the Podium” was a great hook, maybe the next generation hook can be “Right to Play”?

E. PARTICIPANT RESOURCES

Description of issue:

- Funding is skewed towards high performance sports over community level recreational sports
- Access to transportation – both a safety and cost issue. Most newcomers rely on public transportation – may be okay for practice but inadequate for games and tournaments
- Availability of time is a barrier - many newcomers are busy looking for jobs, working more than one job, or helping other family members
- Economic barrier: low income and high registration costs
- Barriers are both at entry level and high performance level

Solutions:

- Tax deduction that encourages corporations to give more money to grassroots levels and multicultural groups
- Sports clubs need to be better at fundraising
- Create better access to funds, so a portion of registration fee goes into pool to pay for other kids to join. Organization takes responsibility to improve access and gets away from the registration fee model. Parents shouldn’t have to pay whole fee.
- Equipment banks (loan out hockey equipment, people can try out sport at low cost)
- Government can give out land that can be converted to sports facilities/fields

- Reduce cost: Partnering with public transportation – subsidized tokens, buddy-system so kids that live near each other can carpool or bus together – organization should facilitate this buddy-system linking
- Equipment can be tested out at grassroots level by kids playing at recreational level (rather than testing out equipment on elite athletes)
- Community schools have resources, teachers, coaches, gym space, swimming pools – partnership can be created to reduce costs, increase capacity of organizations to develop partnerships

F. RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

Description of issue:

- Overt and systemic racism; more prominent and frequent than before and starting at a younger age
- Lack of cultural sensitivity (failure to recognize different approaches, philosophy, restrictions due to cultural/religious beliefs, etc)
- Lack of acknowledgement that racism and discrimination is a problem – uneasiness/awkwardness in addressing it and/or silence from top-down
- Problem is not restricted to coaches - also an issue with referees and parents
- Inability to handle incidents of racism – no protocol in place

Solutions:

- Should be a policy of “no racism,” zero tolerance on racism
- Should be a “sports racism policy”, that addresses racism and discrimination similar to Human Rights Commission policies
- Have harsher penalties for athletes that make racist comments; similarly members of the audience should be banned from watching if they make racist comments
- Needs to be on the agenda at all levels of government
- Increase competency to deal with racism - sport clubs need protocol and rules in place to handle incidents of racism on the field of play

In addition, the following issues or challenges were raised but time was insufficient to address them in more detail and to recommend solutions:

G. DIVERSITY

- Diverse backgrounds – although newcomers face some common barriers, they are not a homogeneous group and have a diversity of needs.

H. NEW VERSUS TRADITIONAL “CANADIAN” SPORTS

- There is sometimes tension between responding to demands for new popular activities originating from ethno-cultural communities (e.g., Kendo) and demands for traditional Canadian sports.

I. GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

- Inconsistent policy amongst different levels of government, both in terms of delivery and message (different definitions, age categories, etc.). Lack of coordination to deliver a common and consistent message.
- All three levels of government seem disconnected.

J. LOW PRIORITY OF SPORT FOR DIVERSE POPULATIONS

- Perception that sport for ethno-cultural populations is at the bottom end of priorities at the municipal level. Even though there is support for sport activities, decisions are often based on political considerations (e.g., refusal to convert hockey rink into cricket playing field even though there is public support for the conversion).

Priorities

4. If the sport community, including both government and non-governmental organizations, were to take action to address these issues, how would you prioritize the issues based on achieving the greatest impact for the most people?

Even though participants acknowledged that it is very difficult to establish priorities, since all issues are intertwined, the following elements were considered as having the most impact:

- A. Participant resources
 - Need to make sport more affordable
- B. Sport organization capacity and commitment
 - Build a commitment to take action
 - Improve the capacity to take action
 - Strengthen through key partnerships (i.e. knowledgeable partners)
- C. Facilities
 - a key to participation (no space, no game)
 - use of facilities to maximize participation of ethno-cultural populations (this needs to be planned, not accidental)
- D. Knowledge
 - need to raise awareness of Canadian sports

Conclusion

The reality of the increasing ethno-cultural diversity of Canada's population needs to be recognized in the new Canadian Sport Policy. The policy needs to move beyond simply promoting the inclusion of visible minorities in sport as an under-represented group. There is a need to recognize that the Canadian sport system will be strengthened by a greater engagement of all of our diverse ethno-cultural populations. Traditional approaches to facility development and use and to sport programming design and

delivery need to change. The sport community needs to recognize that, like society as a whole, it is not immune from racism and discrimination. Immigrants need opportunities to learn traditional Canadian sports. Canadian sport needs to recognize that immigrants bring with them interest and expertise in a variety of sports - some played widely in Canada and some not. Language, cultural and religious considerations, and newcomer issues all need to be taken into account. A truly inclusive sport system where all Canadians have opportunities to participate and excel in sport requires intentional efforts that go beyond a simple “everyone is welcome” policy.

Round Table Participants

Sport Canada would like to thank the following people who took time from their busy schedules to bring their significant passion, experience and knowledge to this round table:

- Dave Sora, Program Director, Malvern Family Resource Centre, Toronto
- Yuka Nakamura, Associate Professor, School of Kinesiology and Health Science, York University, Toronto
- Gary Fonrose, Volunteer, Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre
- Adam Kahnamelli, Co-Director, One Team United For Development and Peace Society; Event Coordinator, Vancouver International Soccer Festival
- Charles Yuen, Chair, BC Chinese Soccer Federation, Vancouver
- Barbara Ursuliak, Community Recreation Coordinator, Community Services, City of Edmonton

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