

Engaging Girls and Young Women from Diverse Ethno-Cultural Communities

INCREASING CULTURAL AWARENESS

Canadian communities are becoming increasingly diverse, creating new challenges and opportunities for community sport and physical activity providers. Unfortunately, Girls and women from diverse ethno-cultural communities are the most underrepresented in Canada's sport and physical activity system (Sport Canada, 2005). Based on learnings from two CAAWS projects, the following considerations were identified to increase the cultural awareness of service providers to support the creation of welcoming sport and physical activity environments. **Consult community members and/or cultural groups to educate yourself and your organization about the unique needs and experiences of the ethno-cultural communities you serve.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- **GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION** – Locate the country or region of origin on a map to better understand the terrain, weather, and neighbouring countries.
- **HISTORY** – Read about the history of the country, including the political, economic and cultural history. Previous experiences may affect individual and family practices (e.g. civil war, economic strife). History may also explain conflict between groups within your community.
- **LANGUAGE** – Translate promotional and educational materials into the language of the community. Hire staff and volunteers to deliver programs and services in the community's language. Ask community members to teach you basic greetings to welcome them when they arrive for programs.
- **RELIGION** – Learn about the religion of the community, and know their days of worship. Keep in mind religious beliefs and practices may vary within communities, and affect the following considerations in a number of ways.
- **GIRLS AND WOMEN** – Beliefs and attitudes about the role of girls and women vary within and between cultural and religious groups. Service providers must understand how these beliefs may affect participation, and adapt programs and services accordingly.
 - *Attire*: Respect the clothing choices of girls and young women (and their families) for comfort, modesty or religious/cultural reasons. Understand the beliefs surrounding the wearing of a veil, hijab, niqab or burqa.
- *Activities*: Learn about sports and physical activities practiced by girls and young women in the community's country of origin (e.g. traditional dance, netball). Talk with program participants and consult with parents about appropriate sport and physical activities, as well as discussion/educational topics.
- *Female-only environments*: Some girls and young women are restricted from participating in mixed sex environments, requiring female-only environments with windows and doors covered, and only female instructors (including lifeguards).
- *Availability for programming*: Consider the scheduling of other programs (e.g. language, culture or religion classes), days and times of worship, and concurrent programming for siblings.
- **FOOD** – Become familiar with the dietary practices and restrictions of the community (e.g. vegetarian, restricted meat or shellfish consumption, alcohol use, etc.). Fasting may occur in conjunction with religious holidays. Consider variations in the use of forks/knives vs. chopsticks vs. the hands.
- **HOLIDAYS** – Consider the religious and cultural holidays celebrated by the communities you serve in program planning and scheduling. Learn about their origin (e.g. whether religious, celebratory, or memorial), and associated practices (e.g. ceremonies, fasting, restricted activity). Seek opportunities for your organization to contribute to community events, as appropriate.

- **CUSTOMS** – Become familiar with other community customs, including differences in eye contact, physical contact, greetings, and conversation styles.

- **PARENTS** – Parents play an important role in the lives of girls and young women from diverse ethno-cultural communities. Take time to create relationships and open communication with family members.

REMEMBER: Religious, ethnic and cultural communities are diverse and complex, and beliefs and practices may differ within and between groups. Be careful not to make assumptions or rely on stereotypes. Educate yourself and your organization about the specific needs, interests and experiences of the communities you serve.

Take Action Today!

To increase the availability and utilization of sport and physical activity programs for girls and young women from diverse ethno-cultural communities, CAAWS led the *Making Healthy Connections with Racialized Communities* project.

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

Findings from focus groups with girls and young women from diverse ethno-cultural communities, and program leaders; includes stats and facts, and background information on the concepts of race, racism and racialization. Hardcopies available by request.

HOST A WORKSHOP

Learn more about the project and findings, explore the complexities of race and multiculturalism, and gather further tips and recommendations to increase the participation of diverse girls and young women in your community.

GET “ON THE MOVE”

CAAWS’ national *On the Move* initiative provides practical information about creating quality sport and physical activity experiences for inactive girls and young women (ages 9-18).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women
and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS)**

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