

# Generating Insights of Cultural Competency within a Nationally-run Trauma-sensitive Sport Program for Canadian Newcomer Children

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## KEY FACT

The aim for a newcomer sport program should be to support effective inclusion, not for newcomers to absorb or assimilate into the community or your organization. Strive to create an experience where everyone is influenced and shaped as newcomers join the community.

## 1 BACKGROUND



Newcomer children (i.e., immigrants, refugees) face high rates of traumatic exposure (e.g., abuse, neglect, family violence, persecution, war, poverty, displacement). There is a need for interventions to help re-orient these children on resilience pathways.<sup>1</sup>

Using trauma-sensitive sport programming can support children's healing, through designing safe spaces, fostering supportive adult-child relationships, and offering structured opportunities to engage in competitive physical activities and skill-building.

More research is needed on how to accommodate the unique needs and inclusion of Canadian Newcomer populations in sport – a diverse and underrepresented cohort.<sup>2</sup>



## 2 OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to co-generate insights of cultural competency with staff members (i.e., managers, front-line staff) of a national community organization (BGC Canada) who offers trauma-sensitive sport programming to Canadian newcomer children – known as the Bounce Back League (BBL).



## 3 METHODS

An action research case study methodology was used, in which 11 staff (9 women, 2 men;  *Mage* = 28.64 ± 7.98) from five clubs were trained on trauma-sensitive sport, by expert trainers in an online training workshop.

These staff went on to host weekly, afterschool BBL programs for children ages 9-12, in local Clubs, as either virtual or in-person programs

A participatory approach was used to engage staff in ongoing bi-weekly meetings (n= 10), facilitated by a multi-disciplinary team of administrators, evaluators, and expert trainers. The purpose was to co-learn and co-construct strategies for cultural competency.



Staff attended BBL Training Workshop



Staff implemented BBL at Clubs



Staff attended ongoing advisory meetings

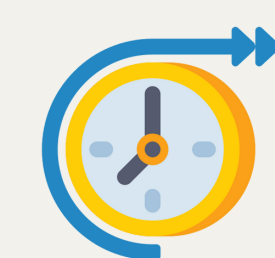


Data were collected through field notes and audio-recordings of advisory meetings, and project reports, and interpreted through a qualitative descriptive analysis.

## 5 RESULTS

Insights for facilitating culturally inclusive programs for Canadian Newcomers were generated across several categories. Five of these categories are discussed here:

Maintaining relationship-building with consistent and reliable staff



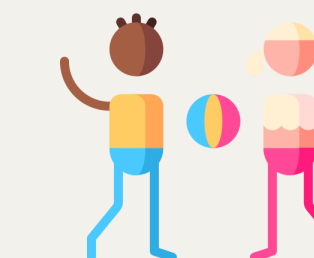
- Involve staff who can stay in programs long-term.
- Have external staff visit the program intermittently; help them build familiarity with programs and youth.

- Recruit within newcomer communities to bridge language, culture and shared experiences.
- Consider hiring newcomer community members as volunteer/paid staff to enhance connection, familiarity, and reliability with youth.



Seeking commonalities and honouring differences using sports and games

- Work to find common interest activities.
- Acknowledge when there are differences and facilitate dialogue to celebrate and explore these differences.



- Create activities that require few rules and don't require heavy use of language.

Using accessible language in outreach and engagement

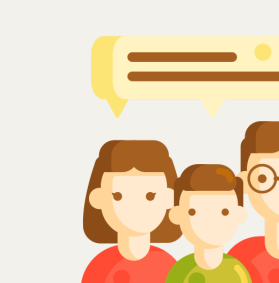
- Translate flyers, registrations, welcome signs in community languages.
- Encourage members to interpret for each other.
- Encourage members to be patient with others who speak different languages.



The key takeaways from the results were that for programs to be trauma-informed AND culturally-sensitive, they must facilitate safety, awareness and respect of other peoples' cultures, inclusion of youth voice in programs, and opportunities for belongingness for both youth and their parents/caregivers.

Engaging caregivers directly within programs

- Facilitate parent/caregiver orientations and welcome meetings.
- Create space for parents/caregivers to mingle and watch programs.



- Engage in informal time before or after programs.
- Break bread, find ways to share a meal, a snack, cup of tea.



Integrating newcomers' language, traditions, heritage in the experience

- Co-create ground rules with youth that are understanding of diverse backgrounds (i.e. gendered norms in various cultures, physical contact, etc.)



- Learn everyone's names, correct pronunciations, and pronouns. Educate about the importance of claiming one's name.

Effort made by staff at the Club was translating to families in their native language so that they felt more comfortable asking questions, and so they would feel supported and heard in the transition [from in-person to virtual]

## 6 DISCUSSION

- The use of an advisory group helped generate context-relevant strategies for cultural sensitivity and relevancy, and inclusion of youth with diverse backgrounds.
- Using a participatory approach with these staff was valuable in promoting community voice and input on program planning and strategy production.<sup>3</sup>
- Incorporating opportunities to share one's own culture an learn about others cultures can help promote mutual appreciation and respect and establish commonalities.<sup>4</sup>
- Effective programming can benefit from staff who share similarities with the newcomer youth – and greater participation of members of newcomer communities as coaches or leaders of sport programs should be encouraged.<sup>4</sup>

## REFERENCES

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### AFFILIATIONS



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