



## CREATING A SAFE, WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE SPORT ENVIRONMENT IN CANADIAN SPORT

UNTIL ALL OF US HAVE MADE IT, NONE OF US HAVE MADE IT.

- ROSEMARY BROWN

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. They are able to participate and bring their whole self to whatever field, arena, board room that they choose. We have made many strides in our sport system in Canada, but we still have a ways to go as we look at the representation of who is participating, competing and in leadership positions. The diversity of our nation is not represented throughout all aspects of our sport system- and it is this representation of our country that we aspire to have at every level of our sport system in the future.

This document has been designed to assist you in getting started or building on existing work to create a safe, inclusive and welcoming quality sport environment in Canada. It is with your leadership and personal commitment to making change that we will make progress towards these goals. This process is ongoing and requires a long-term commitment to action, with continual learning, communication, measurement and feedback along the way. Sport will be a better place when all potential and current participants feel that they want to be involved, that they are valued and respected, that their needs and interests are addressed, that they feel supported in taking on more leadership roles, that they feel they are in environments which are safe and free from maltreatment, and they feel "they belong." Full participation in quality sport means that all those who wish to participate can do so regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ability, age or language.

### **What does a safe, welcoming and inclusive sport system look like?**

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.



## **Where do we start?**

This quality sport environment is one where we fully embrace diversity and demonstrate inclusion. Sport leaders often ask: Where do we start? This resource provides basic information on the benefits of addressing diversity and inclusion, a guiding framework (Fundamentals for Success) and definitions of terms being used, and an Assessment Tool. 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.

## **Making the Commitment**

For an organizational change process to be successful, there must be a strong personal commitment across the organization (board, management, staff, coaches and volunteers), and particularly from leaders and decision-makers creating and supporting change. 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

One of the first steps in this work is to look closely at ourselves and become self-aware of our own biases. We all have conscious and unconscious bias. While it's part of being human to make assumptions and associations based on our experiences and interactions with people, we may be led to overlook or inadvertently exclude people by our unconscious biases, stereotypes or our discomfort with people we perceive to be different to us.

## **CPC Commitment**

- We commit to becoming better at recognizing and transforming practices, policies, and other formal and informal barriers that do not support this mandate of better opportunities, in a greater number of sport roles, for a greater diversity of Canadians - particularly for Canadians with disabilities who also face other major barriers to safe and meaningful sport participation.
- As a community of employees, volunteers, stakeholders, athletes, coaches and partners we have a shared responsibility to come together around these shared values and take action in a societal transformation where the commitment to a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment is a corporate responsibility and an individual one.



## **Starting the Conversation**

The CPC's broad approach to creating a safe, welcoming and inclusive sport environment includes sharing the initial steps senior sport leaders can take to address diversity and equity issues across the board, with the hope that they will share this information with their own teams at the National level, and also at the Provincial/Territorial and community sport level. Since participants' first sport experiences usually happen at the community level, we must ensure that their experience is positive, enjoyable, safe and free of maltreatment, barrier-free and a quality sport experience which addresses their individual needs and interests through consultation and jointly developing workable solutions.

Important work is being done by many organizations in the sport community to address diversity and marginalized identity (see the Resource section). By its very nature, diversity intersects across identities. We need to address all of our diversity at the same time because people are not only their genders or their (dis)abilities. All of us have genders, and ethnicities, sexual orientation and gender identities, and many of us face barriers related to more than one of these identities. We need to ensure that all of us get to bring all of ourselves to all of our sport spaces.

### **Definitions:**

**Safe** - A safe environment is a positive space that promotes consent-based participation and all participants' physical, emotional and social development and well-being. It is free from abuse, maltreatment, misconduct, bullying, harassment and hazing, and involves treating all participants with dignity.

**Welcoming** - A welcoming environment has a culture that ensures everyone involved in, or participating in, your sport 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 your sport 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** - 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, in



order 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.

**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.

*The need to have more meaningful conversations about diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias in sport has never been greater.*

The CPC Diversity and Inclusion Committee, comprised of NSO/MSO sport partners and stakeholders, created the Fundamentals for Success which informs the Assessment Tool.

## Fundamentals for Success

1. **Attitude** – We acknowledge that attitudes, assumptions and stereotypes are learned and that they impact how we treat others and ultimately impact our entire physical activity and sport system. We are committed to processes of expanding our learning so that we can better understand and transform how we treat others. This involves a commitment to learning to recognize our own unconscious biases, learning about structural barriers within our sports organization, and learning from those who have been excluded about how to reduce barriers to their safe and meaningful inclusion continually.
2. **Leadership** (Board of Directors, Staff, Volunteer Commitment) - We believe that “our team” must be committed to, and be visible champions for, equity, diversity and inclusion in all



that we do. Having a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment is a collaborative effort that must engage every individual throughout the entire organization.

3. **Leadership** (Partners & Influencers) - We believe that collaboration results in better outcomes. We believe that a deeper understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion among all stakeholders is crucial to progress. We will be avid promoters to those that we work with regarding our commitment to this area in all that we do and the steps to undertake in this work.
4. **Policy** - We have policies in place as a foundation for the work that we undertake to create a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment. The policy states our commitment and is a starting point for our work. Our desired end state is that our policies lead to building a culture committed to a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment throughout all that we do. We will not tolerate inappropriate or offensive behaviour that does not support the broader vision of a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment.
5. **Programs/Services** - We continually strive to make our programs and services accessible to all participants, we address the individual needs and interests in ways they have identified as appropriate, and we actively break down barriers in the system to create safe, welcoming and inclusive environments. We will amplify the efforts of others, develop tools and resources where there are gaps and share our learnings.
6. **Environment/Architecture** - We commit to ensuring that all the environments we use, access or create for engagement with our partners and community are fully accessible, safe and welcoming. This also includes all third-party service support, vendors or contractors engaged by the CPC.
7. **Communication** - We have clear, consistent, open communication and we proactively speak to the community members that are not yet part of our team. All aspects of our communications and brand should reflect the diversity of Canada and be accessible for all.
8. **Accountability** - We believe that what gets measured matters. We believe in establishing clear, concise accountabilities that assist us with staying on track for our goals. We also believe that accountability should go beyond what is measurable, and also include a transparent process through which those who do not feel like you have done the above can offer either anonymous or identifiable feedback (their choice) and that these will be taken seriously, and acted upon without any negative recourse to those offering feedback, and that the board wishes to be held accountable for ensuring this is done. Creating a "call in" culture is crucial if you are serious about change.
9. **Safe Discussion Process**- A process should be identified that an individual can share their thoughts and questions regarding inclusion or lack there of.