

2011

Municipality Use of Sport and Recreation to Support the Integration of Newcomers and their Families

Submitted to the North Bay Newcomer Network

Abstract: This report provides a background discussion on the topic of sport and recreation participation of immigrants and their families. It also presents a web-based content analysis of Ontario sport and recreation organizations to assess what programs are being offered in the Province targeting newcomers and their particular needs. In addition, the report provides an analysis of interviews with newcomers and sport and recreational service providers. In conclusion, the report provides some recommendations for action by the NNN and other community organizations to improve the community for newcomers and their families.



Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Background Discussion	4
Importance of Sport and Recreation	4
Potential Negative Impact of Sport and Recreation on Community Receptiveness ..	5
Challenges to Realizing the Integrative Benefits of Sport and Recreation	5
Primary Research	6
Objective 1 - Ontario Cities Use of Sport and Recreation to Support Integration	6
Description:.....	6
Method:.....	6
Findings:	9
Objective 2 - Identify Common Barriers to Accessing Sport and Recreation Activities for Immigrants.....	16
Description:.....	16
Method:.....	16
Findings:	16
Objective 3 - Identify Support in North Bay and Area for Sport and Recreational Activities Related to Helping Integrate Immigrants.....	20
Description:.....	20
Method:.....	20
Findings:	20
Recommendations	24
Reference List	25

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank those who provided valuable support during this project. In particular, Laura-Jane Cote for her prompt replies to queries and Deborah Robertson for assisting with the recruitment of participants for the newcomer interviews. Of course, we would also like to thank Don Curry for his overall support of the project.

Note: the authors retain the rights to publish the results of this work in scholarly journals and conferences.

Introduction

Immigration is critically important to maintain population growth in Canada as the country's natural growth accounted for only 25% of population expansion in the period 2001-2006 (CBC News, 2007). However, this issue is more complex than simply attracting people to move to a new place in a new country. Communities must find a way to retain those people who choose to immigrate or see them migrate elsewhere within the country. Certainly, there have been calls for a redistribution of migrants from the larger Canadian cities to the smaller and medium urban centers (Krahn, Derwing, & Abu-Laban, 2005; Walton-Roberts, 2005; George, 2002). Sport and recreation activities may represent a way for these smaller communities to better integrate newcomers with the goal of retaining them (Lee & Funk, 2011; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004) or attracting them from larger centres.

This report will strive to deepen our understanding of the role of sport and recreation in making smaller urban centers more welcoming. In particular, much of the report focuses its investigation on the specific geographic area of North Bay and is guided by three primary objectives:

1. Outline how other cities in Ontario are using sports and recreation to support the integration of newcomers and their families into the community
2. Identify common barriers to access sports and recreation by immigrants and their families.
3. Identify support in North Bay and area for sport and recreation activities related to helping integrate immigrants into the community.

The report is organized into three subsequent sections. First, a synopsis of public information on the general intersection of sport and recreation with newcomers in communities is articulated. Second, there is a presentation of the primary research methodology and results targeted to achieve each specific objective. Third, the report concludes with some recommendations for North Bay and area to enhance the welcoming nature of the community through sport and recreation activities.

Background Discussion

A review of the academic literature and popular press provides some insight into the role of sport and recreation in helping to foster receptive and supportive communities. The following discussion examines the importance of sports and recreation with respect to fostering welcoming communities, potential negative influence of sport and recreation on creating welcoming communities and the challenges to achieving the newcomer integration benefits associated with

Importance of Sport and Recreation

There is evidence to support the argument that sport and recreation activities can assist with the integration of newcomers in a community (Lee & Funk, 2011; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Vilhjalmsson & Thorlindsson, 1992). Anecdotally, Beri (2004) highlights the role of sport as a means for children of immigrant families to connect with parents and learn more about the new country's culture. Similarly, Omidvar (2010) discusses the role that soccer plays in the urban community to facilitate friendships and associate with the new country's national identity. In this case, the author points to soccer as a critical part of the Canadian identity and

newcomer involvement with the sport helps them feel more comfortable in their new locale.

Academic research also reflects the perspective that sport, in general, can enhance integration capacity (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Stodolska & Alexandris (2004) found that while sport provided a venue for acculturation, the participation context of newcomers was more important than the types of sporting activities. However, there are factors that can influence the salience of sport in the integration process. For example, Stodolska & Alexandris (2004) utilized a cultural framework to show that the adaptation path pursued through sport and recreation activities by Korean and Polish newcomers was dependent upon their ethnic group, socio-economic status, gender and length of time in their new home country. Meanwhile, Pons et al. (2001) argue that sport activities represent an important consideration because the cultural meaning of particular sports can vary. Certainly, sport can be used as a way for immigrants to retain their cultural values and social connections within ethnic communities as well as provide a means for adaptation to the new dominant culture (Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). While there is some guidance in the literature, there has been a recent general call for more research on the intersection of sport and culture (Mean & Halone, 2010).

Potential Negative Impact of Sport and Recreation on Community Receptiveness

While sport and recreation activities can be used as vehicles to promote social inclusion (Liu, 2009), there is a potentially strong counter current of racism that can be enabled through sport (Mean & Halone, 2010). Sport activities may represent an opportunity for conflict and suppression as illustrated by a recent news article identifying a young referee who was being barred from working in a sports league while wearing a hijab (Blatchford, 2011). In general, sports function as a central component to the establishment of a social network whereby people may be identified as a member of the group or a non-member (Daskalos, 2007). In the specific context of ethnicity, sporting events may be used to break down barriers of division but they can also be vehicles to perpetuate inequality and exclusion (Burdsey, 2008). This exclusion may occur through the reinforcement of cultural differences between newcomers and the dominant host country during sport activities (Lee & Funk, 2011; Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010). Therefore, this is an area that warrants monitoring and further research attention in the hopes of improving the management of community integration efforts through sport and recreation activities.

Challenges to Realizing the Integrative Benefits of Sport and Recreation

The potential negative impact of sport and recreation on community integration of newcomers is a reason for concern, but so too are the potential barriers in harnessing the benefits of sport and recreation. A major hindrance in using sport and recreation as an integration tool for communities is the low participation rates in these activities among newcomers (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Get ACTIVE Toronto, 2011). For instance, high school students with parents born in Canada are more likely to participate in sport (32%) compared to those with parents born in other countries (22%) (Get ACTIVE Toronto, 2011). The release of the Get ACTIVE Toronto (2011) report was coupled with a call for more research investigating the removal of barriers that newcomers face when accessing sport and recreation activities (Alamenciak, 2011). Certainly, the system level factors are critically important when

considering participation rates particularly among adults (Lim, Warner, Dixon, Berg, Kim, & Newhouse-Bailey, 2011). Some of these barriers include family responsibilities and the expense associated with sport and recreation activities (Alamenciak, 2011). The Get ACTIVE Toronto report (2011) also included several recommendations, such as, the development of co-ed school sports teams, creation of family-based physical activities, encouragement of partnerships/sponsorship of community activities, implementation of workplace wellness programs, and support for teachers in the promotion of healthy lifestyles with children.

The issue of newcomer retention may also improve our understanding of realizing the integration benefits of sport and recreation. Krahn et al. (2005) examine the mobility of newcomers to smaller cities and the specific issues that motivated people to go elsewhere. They identified several issues pertaining to language, employment, navigation of bureaucracy, family, childcare, immigration status, expectations and discrimination. Similarly, another study identified barriers facing new migrants to Canada such as language barriers, inadequate information, unemployment, and different perceptions about social support (Stewart, et al., 2008). While not explicitly referred to in these studies, these barriers can relate to sport and leisure activities. For instance, sport activities may be used as opportunities to retain newcomers through the development of local friendships and encourage family interaction within the community.

Primary Research

The subsequent sections of the report pertain directly to each of the three objectives by discussing our interpretation of the objectives, the research methodology employed, and the analysis of results.

Objective 1 - Ontario Cities Use of Sport and Recreation to Support Integration

Description:

The purpose of Objective 1 was interpreted in two parts. First, this objective necessitated a review of popular and scholarly literature to assess how other Ontario cities might be using sports and recreation to assess the integration of newcomers. Second, as the literature on this topic for Ontario cities was relatively sparse, the project would build on this limited base by conducting some primary research of publicly available information for sports and recreation organizations in smaller urban centers within the province.

Method:

The method used to achieve Objective 1 involved a website-based content analysis. The analysis was conducted between the dates of May 31/2011 and July 25/2011. The purpose was to determine the services offered by the sport and recreation organizations in the city being studied. This was accomplished with a broad search of sport and recreation organizations in the city and surveying of each website.

This website content analysis examined 786 different organizations from 25 cities. North Bay, Dryden, Kenora, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Timmins, Thunder Bay were the cities selected to represent Northern Ontario. The following cities were examined to give a larger geographical representation of the Province for the analysis: Barrie, Belleville, Brockville, Burlington, Chatham-Kent, Cornwall, Guelph, Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener-Waterloo, London, Niagara Falls/St. Catharines, Ottawa, Owen Sound, Pembroke, Peterborough, Sarnia, and Windsor. Table 1 illustrates the number of organizations studied in each city.

Table 1: Web Content Analysis Regional Assessment

City	Number of Organizations
Ottawa	66
Niagara Falls/St. Catharines	47
Kitchener-Waterloo	45
Barrie	39
London	39
Timmins	39
Hamilton	36
Burlington	35
Guelph	34
Sudbury	34
Windsor	33
North Bay	32
Peterborough	32
Sarnia	31
Thunder Bay	30
Kingston	28
Chatham-Kent	26
Belleville	24
Owen Sound	23
Pembroke	22
Sault Ste. Marie	22
Cornwall	21
Kenora	19
Brockville	18
Dryden	11
Total	786

The subsequent analysis of sport and recreation service providers throughout the Province's smaller cities was guided on the basis of four factors: service characteristics, cultural aspects, access and inclusion. The specific measurement items for each factor are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Web Content Analysis Measurement Items

Service Characteristics	Cultural Aspects	Access Factors	Inclusion
Service Offered	Language Support	Cost	Specific Groups Targeted
Category of Service	Gender-based Programs	Location/Access	Diversity Reflected on Website
Services for Newcomers	Family Inclusive Programs	Ease of Transaction	How is it Reflected
		Child Care	

The first set of variables measured pertains to service characteristics of the organization sampled. “Service offered” captured the specific sports and recreation service provided to the community. This data was subsequently categorized by the researchers into four different groupings; sports league, sports and recreation, recreation, and fitness. In several cases, the organization provided services in more than one of the categories so multiple representations were recorded. The “services for newcomers” variable depicts services that are offered specifically designed for newcomers. Examples of these services include special language programs, cultural sensitivity classes, and settlement services that newcomers may utilize to make their transition easier. However, the purpose of this variable was to record whether or not certain accommodations or services are provided and not the specific type as captured in other variables. This is an important consideration as low sport and recreation participation rates was previously identified as an issue (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Get ACTIVE Toronto, 2011)

A second set of measurement items reflect cultural aspects that can be important for sport- and leisure-based interaction (Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohn, 2010; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). The “language support” variable records if an organization has any special support for newcomers to help overcome language barriers. This can be represented as offering services in various languages, using interpreters, or offering classes. The “gender-based programs” variable recorded whether there were gender specific programs offered to reflect the desire for modesty in certain sports or leisure activities. This could be a large factor for some newcomers and their families depending on their culture. “Family inclusive programs” were an item to measure the opportunity to involve the whole family in the activity (Beri 2004). This sort of programming could be beneficial by making children feel more comfortable, providing the opportunity for social interaction among various families and by providing family together time. This was important to include in the study as some cultures place a high value on the family unit.

A third group of measurement items relate to access factors and includes cost, location, ease of transaction and childcare. Cost is a key factor for any decision and was assessed on the basis of being able to participate in an activity (i.e. per use cost and/or membership fees). Cost to participate was represented in four ranges: \$0-25 \$26-100, \$101-350 and \$351 and higher. The purpose of using ranges was to reflect a reasonable breakdown of affordability. The location/access variable recorded the potential for transportation to be a barrier for the use of the services. To capture this data, an organization was identified as offering services in a single location versus

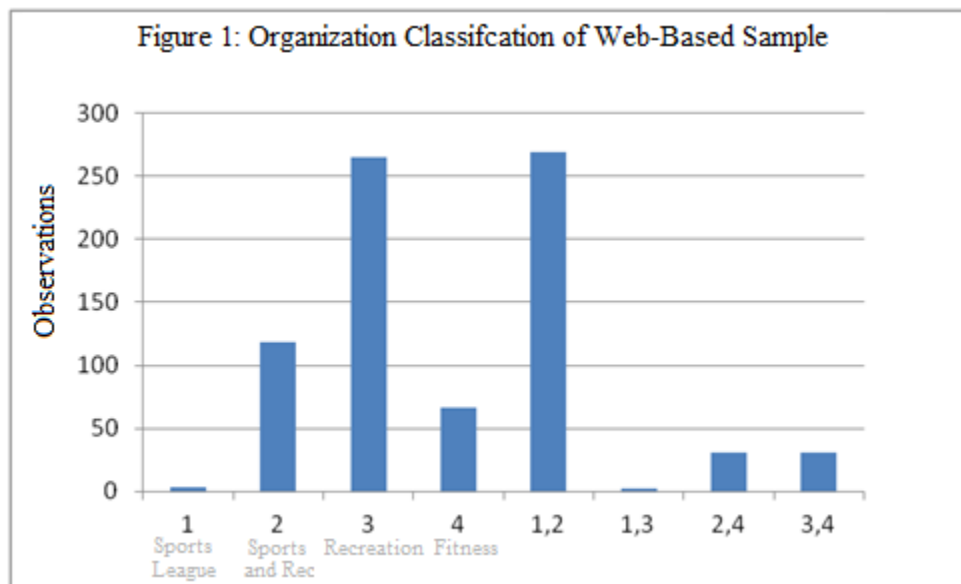
multiple locations and out of town participation. Location/access can be an issue for newcomers as transportation can often be a limiting issue. The “ease of involvement” item describes how easy it is to participate in the activity. For instance, what barriers are needed to breach before the program can be accessed by a newcomer? The “childcare” item recorded whether child minding services were provided to enable a parent to participate in the activity.

A fourth measurement set assesses the extent of inclusion, such as, the targeting of specific groups and how well diversity is reflected on the websites. The “specific groups targeted” variable was used to record if the organization made any attempts at segmenting certain groups and specifically targeting them. The “diversity” reflected on website” item captured the communication of services provided using images of visible minorities. The intention was to identify where some organizations made an effort to exude a more welcoming appeal to a broader range of clients. This was measured by the presence of visible minorities on websites’ photos and images.

Findings:

The website content analysis was used to determine what is being provided by organizations in various Ontario cities to the public. Four main factors were examined type of service, cultural, access and inclusion.

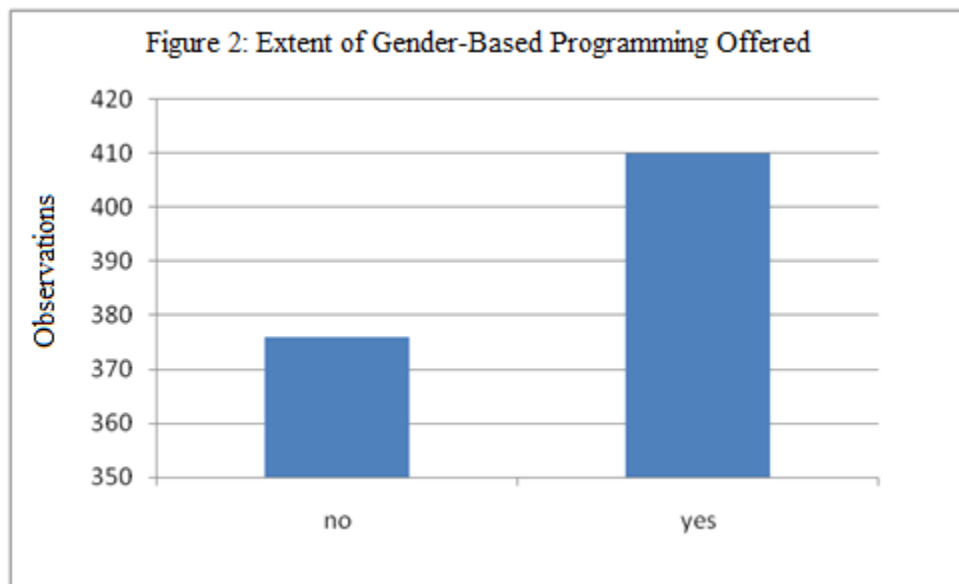
Service Character: The first item of service characteristics, type of service, has four categories, namely, (1) sports league, (2) sports and recreation, (3) recreation and (4) fitness. The following chart describes the first factor in depth with a count of what services are most commonly offered by the organizations sampled. Some organizations offer multiple services which was also recorded.



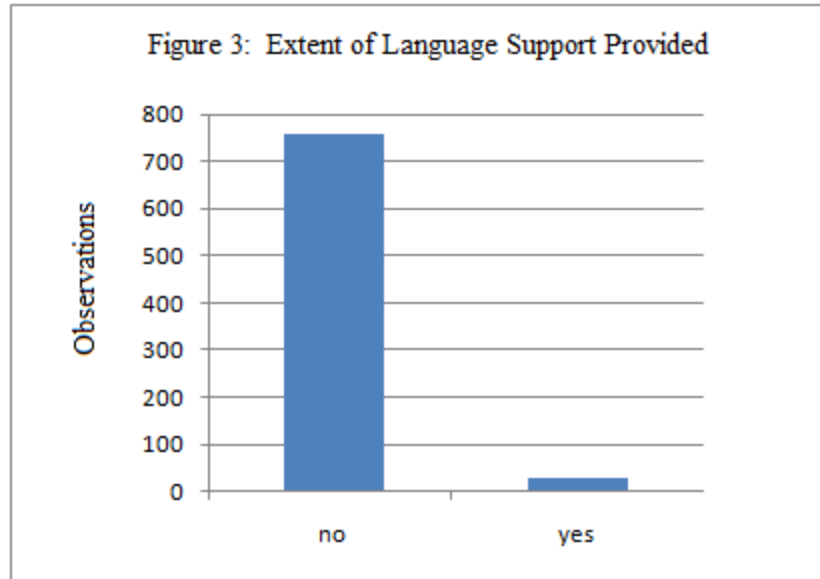
To explore the first factor of service characteristics, Figure 1 highlights the distribution of services provided in the sample. As this graph shows the majority of the organizations offered a strictly recreational service or a combination of sport

league and other sport and recreation programs. In other words, there is a large quantity of organizations offering both recreational services along with more competitive sports and league play. Very few organizations offer just a league play. This may be due to the large time commitment and cost of organizing leagues.

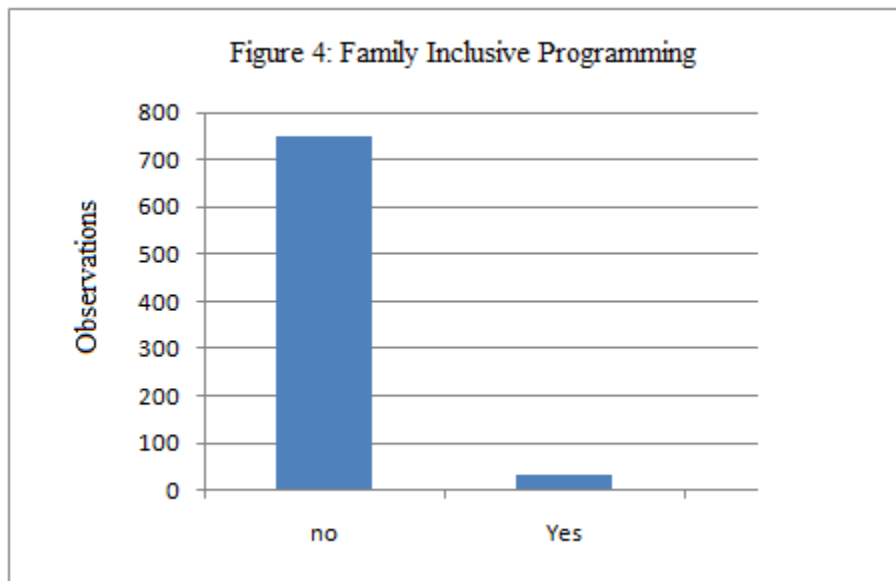
Cultural Aspects: The second factor enables the assessment of some relevant cultural aspects and represents an important component of this study. Cultural factors range from gender-based programming, language and family inclusion. The cultural context delivers varying levels of male and female integration and there may be a desire for gender specific programming from a modesty perspective. Figure 2 depicts the number of organizations that offer gender-based programming. The results show that the majority of organizations did offer separate programming for genders. However, there were many organizations that did not.



From a linguistic perspective, this study demonstrates that the vast majority of organizations did not offer any language support for participants (Figure 3). Language support could take various forms, such as, offering services in different languages, language classes or the use of interpreters. Most organizations only offered their services in English but some were bilingual and some offered French-based programs.



Another cultural factor was the availability of family programs. Some cultures have a high family orientation and desire family inclusive programs giving families the opportunity to bond and maintain a close connection. Very few organizations offered family-based programs, however, many did support and encourage parents to watch their children compete and play.



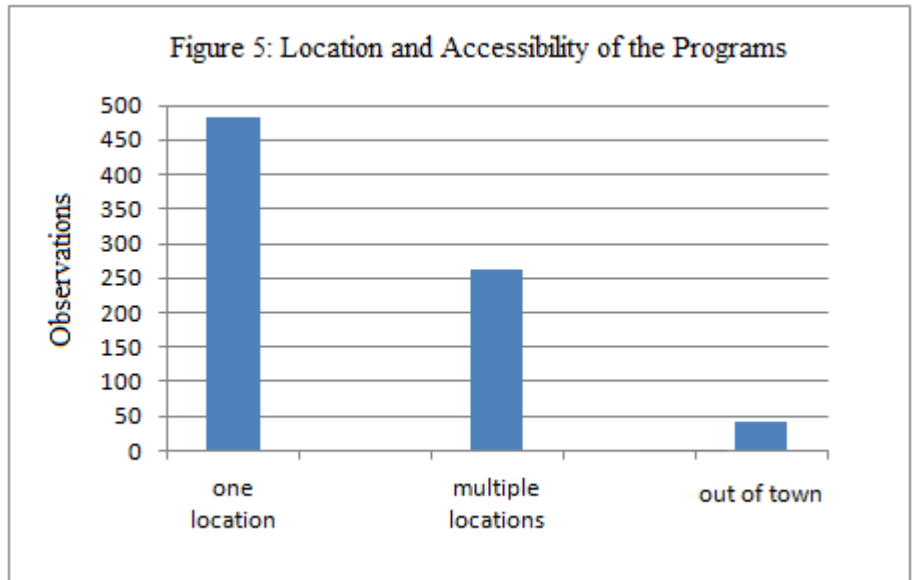
Access Factors: The third major factor grouping is access and includes location, cost, ease of transaction and child care. The location of the sports and recreational activity can range from a single location to multiple locations with the community and beyond. This can be a limiting factor due to transportation challenges among newcomers.

Best Practice Case: YMCA

The YMCA offers year-round sport and recreation services for local communities. The YMCA's typically offer fitness classes, fitness centres, day camps, various courses/classes, and seasonal programming. The YMCA has demonstrated several best practices in establishing a supportive environment for newcomers with a variety of activities. In support of a family inclusive environment, the YMCA offers child care and language support. In addition, their locations tend to be centrally located and easily accessible via transit. An important accommodation made for those with income challenges is the assisted membership fee program to improve access to their programs. The YMCA is well known in many communities with 19 out of the 25 communities studied having a YMCA. This makes the YMCA very accessible and familiar for any newcomers who relocate to a different community. The YMCA has set a standard for accessibility to sport and recreation services in the Province.

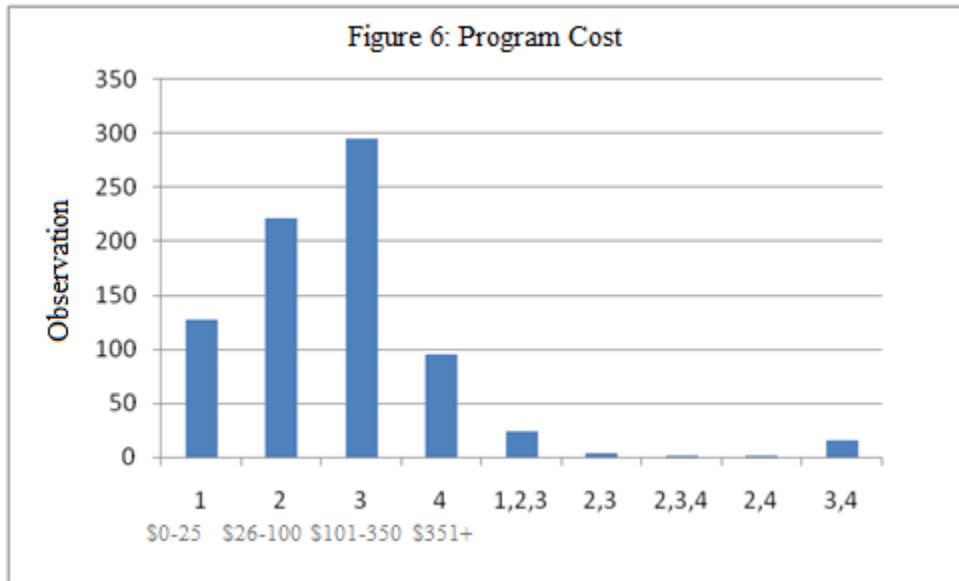
For more information – www.ymca.ca

Figure 5 highlights that the majority of recreational and fitness organizations were offered only at one location. Sport leagues generally had various locations while recreational programs were mostly available at one central location. Some types of recreation, such as, ski trails and horseback riding were only available outside of the urban area.

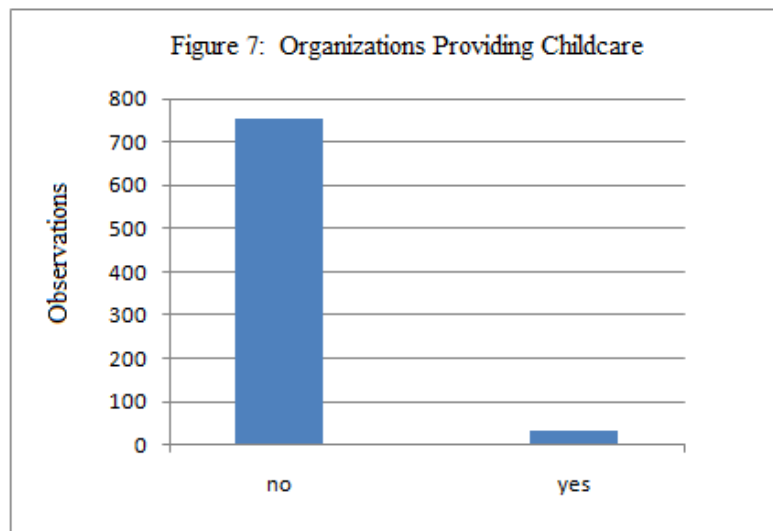


The cost for sport and recreation programs was measured in four ranges to reflect the level of affordability and the observation frequency in the sample of websites is provided in Figure 6. The four different ranges denote the costs involved for participating in the services offered. This varies from season long memberships to per-use payments. Several organizations have multiple programs, competitive programs, recreational programs and daily uses. This leads to the multiple payment categories in the following graph. Various organizations offer different rates and memberships for different groups of people. For instance, seniors, students and children are typically offered different rates than a general adult. In addition, some organizations (e.g. YMCA) offer income geared memberships. The majority of higher cost programs are for season long activities such as hockey, ringette and football. Some seasonal sports, such as soccer and volleyball, are typically lower cost and fall into the third range. Most spectator events are captured in the first range as they are a low cost, entertainment-based method of sport engagement.

The ease of involvement in the activity was not a major issue as it was the same for every organization. All organizations sampled were very easy to engage assuming the costs could be covered. Therefore, a graph has not been provided for the “ease of transaction” variable.



Another access factor considered in the study was the provision of childcare during the activity. It can be an issue for parents because participation may be limited if suitable care for their children is not found for the duration of the activity (Alamenciak, 2011). Figure 7 demonstrates that most organizations did not offer child care. This may result from the high frequency of organizations in the sample providing programs specifically for children. Among those with childcare, the YMCA was the most prolific provider of childcare service to facilitate parental participation.

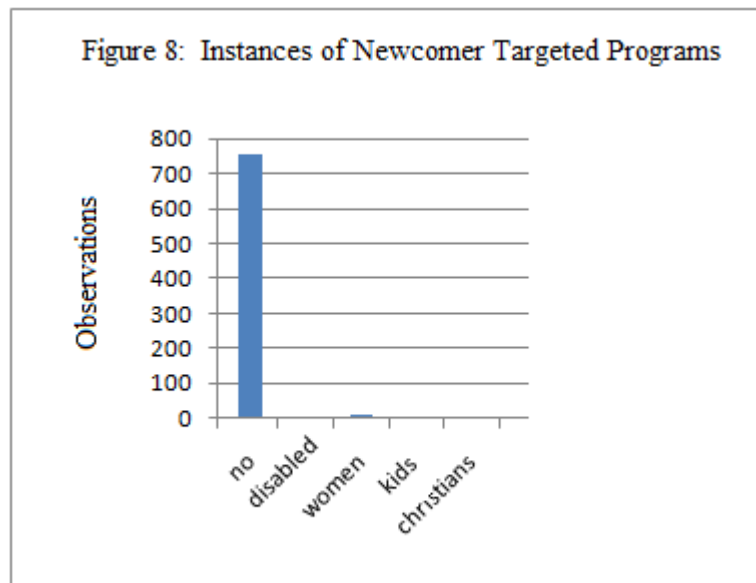


Best Practice Case: DLB Academy

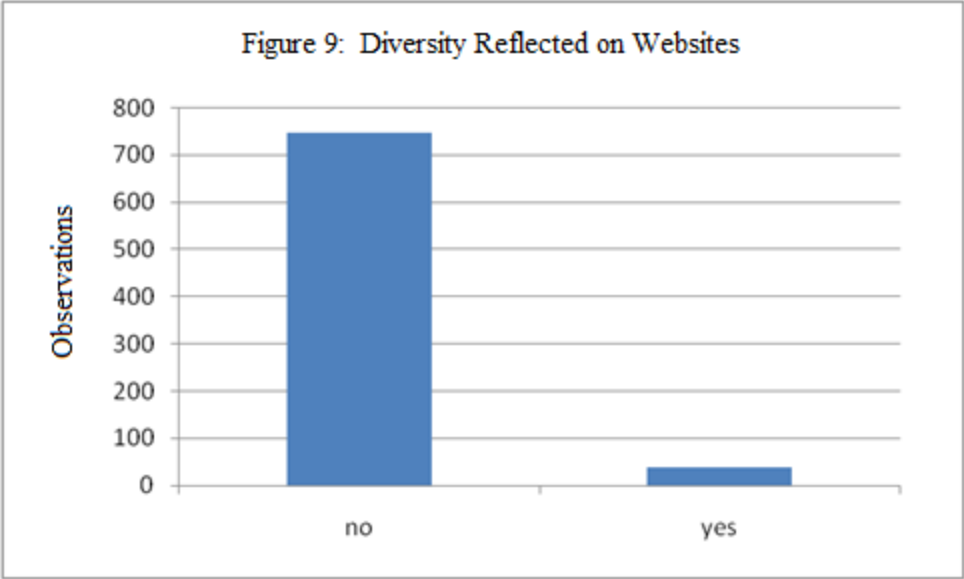
The DLB Academy of Sport and Recreation is in Powassan, Ontario and is a very unique organization. Its services range from soccer camp, boot camp, English camp, and a program centered on Polish nationals and newcomers. This organization is unique in directly targeting Polish migrants and nationals. The DLB Academy organizes transportation for those coming from various parts of Ontario. The programs range from weekend boot camps to summer long programs. Costs are dependent on the program but range from \$200 - \$2500 dollars. The DLB Academy also has a fully equipped fitness centre which includes a weight room, sauna, cardiovascular equipment and a full length gymnasium.

For more information - www.dlbacademy.com

Inclusion: This fourth factor considered in the study contained three items: specific groups targeted, diversity reflected on website and how diversity was reflected. This factor was intended to measure the extent to which newcomers would feel welcome to participate in the organization's activities. As illustrated in Figure 8, almost all organizations did not specifically target any groups as they seemed to pursue a strategy where they remain open and welcoming to all. Certainly, segmenting specific groups can be costly and reduce the opportunity for others to participate.



From another perspective, there seemed to be an absence of diversity in the organizational websites (Figure 9). This is something that can be improved upon to increase the comfort levels of newcomers who are examining the websites. The organizations that reflected diversity did so through photographs of visible minorities. Seeing diversity reflected on such an important contact point may lead to an increased willingness to participate. The majority of organizations reflecting diversity were YMCA's.



In summary, the four factors provide some insight into the use of sport and recreation to integrate newcomers in smaller Ontario cities. First, the results demonstrate that most organizations do not offer any specific resources for newcomers. Service providers should reconsider this position and consider sport and recreation programs that may resonate with local newcomer groups. Second, the cultural aspects of sport and recreation seem to be ignored. Sport and recreation organizations should consider more gender-based programs as appropriate, as well as, language support and family inclusive programming. Third, some access issues are apparent. Certainly, those organizations that offer league play may have a transportation issue for newcomer participants. In addition, costs may be expensive for some sports and recreation activities. Providers should consider pricing strategies that provide a discounted rate based on income and/or based on time of arrival in Canada. Fourth, the majority of organizations did not reflect diversity on their websites. Therefore, a general call should be made to all sport and recreation providers to improve the level of diversity in their image development.

Objective 2 - Identify Common Barriers to Accessing Sport and Recreation Activities for Immigrants

Description:

The purpose of this portion of the project was to assess the experience and needs of newcomers when they interact with sport and recreation organizations. The background discussion provides some insight into the issues newcomers face with sport and recreation. However, the local context required investigation. While the focus was on highlighting barriers existing with current interactions, this report also draws attention to unfulfilled needs of this group.

Method:

The methodology employed to address Objective 2 involved interviews with newcomers. This was done to gain direct insight from newcomers to determine the main barriers and any associated problems with accessing sport and recreation activities in the community. Six newcomers were interviewed with three categories of questions. The first set of questions was background-oriented and was about the general topic of settlement and time spent within the community. These questions also covered personal experience with sports and recreation. The second topic area pertained to the participation of sport and recreation within the local community. These questions included finding barriers and best practices of local organizations and determining how newcomers were informed about the activities. The third set of questions was about being a sport and leisure spectator within the community. These questions included finding which sports were most demanded and how newcomers were informed about these events. The questions gained a sense of what newcomers identified as the main barriers to accessing spectatorship opportunities within the community, which organizations were doing well and where unfilled demand existed.

The interviews were conducted between August 3/2011 and August 23/2011. Newcomers were recruited through a contact from the North Bay Multicultural Centre. Six interviews were completed. There was a variety of nationalities represented including South American, European and American lending a broad spectrum of cultures and different backgrounds to the study. There was a significant range for the length of time spent in Canada ranging from six months to four years. There was also a variance in the duration of time living in the North Bay community from two months to 2.5 years.

Findings:

This report provides the results of the interviews in three parts. First, the participants' perspectives on their understanding of community sport and recreation are explored. Second, the interview comments about sport and recreation participation are examined to identify the barriers that exist and determine what newcomer needs have gone unfulfilled. Third, newcomer barriers and unfulfilled needs are assessed from a sport and recreation spectator perspective.

Community Sport and Recreation: The first section of the interviews investigated topics regarding the tenure of newcomers in the community and their personal opinions towards sport and recreation. Their definitions for sport and recreation activities highlighted clear distinctions between the two terms. Sport activities were described as being more physically active and included participation as an individual or within a team. In addition, sports were described with a clear competitive element. Conversely, recreation was described as having a more relaxed atmosphere that was less competitive. Some suggested that sport activities could be included in a broadly understood recreation term but that some recreation activities (e.g. card games and other more passive activities) could not be considered sport.

“A sport is something like a ball game or football (soccer), recreation is softer, like a card game”

“I consider a sport competitive and recreation more for fun”

“Sport is anything involved in give you a good health in body and mind. Also, it is something to be shared and play as team. Recreation you can do it by yourself or as a team.”

Unanimously, all participants agreed that sport and recreation provided many benefits. Sport activities were said to be a good way to lead a healthy and active life. Recreation was seen to be the domain of stress relief although sports were also related to stress relief for some participants. Sport and recreation activities were also rated as very important among the participants.

“...I can't imagine my life without it”

“It is too very important for me. In (country) it was very often with coworkers, coworker & by myself. In Canada just I do it and train by myself.”

“It plays a very, very important role in my life.”

From a broader community perspective, all but one participant recognized North Bay as a welcoming community. The majority of participants felt that North Bay was an open and friendly place. The experiences with settlement services were described as helpful. However, one participant described North Bay as a somewhat welcoming place and commented that settlement was difficult. This respondent also commented there was a participation limit for themselves in recreational and sporting events.

Sport and Recreation Participation: The second topic examined participation in sport and recreation activities within the North Bay community. The majority of newcomers did not participate within team-based activities. Most newcomers were active through individual pursuits with only one person participating in team sports. The main barrier to participating in team sports was the lack of awareness. The perceived lack of opportunity was a large issue for newcomers. Most did not know where to access

information on sports and recreation. Awareness was highlighted as the largest issue related to accessing sport and recreation services.

“There is a lack of awareness, if I had the opportunity I would use the services more”

“I try to participate in as much as possible even though the selection is rather limited.”

“I don’t know all providers but each time I had to use their services it was very professional and well organized (private providers or public facilities).”

Transportation was identified by respondents as a potential problem inhibiting higher team-based sport participation because the activities are often held in various locations throughout the city. All participants had access to vehicles so transportation for them was not a major issue. However, several respondents reported that it could be a problem for newcomers who do not have access to private transportation.

“Everything is very far away each other. A newcomer does not have an own vehicle.”

“I am the very bad example for that question because I am lucky to have a job and a car...”

“Transportation can be a limiting factor for me”

A third issue discussed by several interviewees was with regards to understanding the sports offered. Several sports offered in North Bay are not as popular or prevalent in different cultures. For example, hockey, football and basketball were sports cited as ones that are not well understood. In particular, hockey may be viewed as a significant component of Canadian culture and it is difficult for newcomers to feel comfortable playing or watching games without the requisite knowledge of rules and strategies. It was suggested that improvements in awareness could lead to an increase in participation from newcomers if they understood more of the sports offered.

“I do not understand the rules of hockey, sensitizing newcomers would give more awareness”

“...I like watching hockey games because the atmosphere.”

Sport and Recreation Spectatorship: The third topic discussed in the interviews queried newcomers about their role as spectators of sport and recreation events. Spectatorship was not reported to be an important factor for most newcomers. Relative to participation, participating in sports was seen as more important to newcomers than being a spectator.

“The only things I have watched are a few soccer games and softball games on base.”

“I love sports, but I do not love watch them as Canadian does.”

“Time and it can be money sometime I don’t know about sports events in North Bay.”

A major issue was identified by respondents as the absence of opportunity to watch sports. This perception may result from low levels of awareness. One interviewee suggested better advertisement of sporting events.

“I think there is a lack of events.”

“There are first class facilities here, but I need more awareness of the programs”

“Better announcement/ advertisement would help me be more aware”

“My first reaction is asking to someone and I like to go in some office to have a list and sure I often use internet.”

“The multicultural centre is my first information resource and I sometime use Internet too.”

Another issue inhibiting higher levels of sport spectatorship is poor sport comprehension. Similar to their responses about participation, several newcomers displayed an interest in hockey but did not understand how it is played. The participants agreed that there were good spectator opportunities for hockey with most newcomers aware of hockey games and how to access them. Even newcomers with poor comprehension of hockey found enjoyment in the arena atmosphere of attending games. Hockey is seen as a large part of the Canadian identity and understanding the game was important to newcomers.

Other barriers to accessing the sport and recreation spectator opportunities were identified as scheduling conflicts and transportation (although not a particular issue for interviewees). In addition, financial cost was cited once in the interviews as another possible issue.

Summary: The main barrier for newcomers in accessing sport and recreational services is awareness. Newcomers are not aware of the services being offered and how to properly access available services. Sports and recreation play a key role in the lives of interview participants.

Objective 3 - Identify Support in North Bay and Area for Sport and Recreational Activities Related to Helping Integrate Immigrants

Description:

The purpose of this objective was interpreted as deepening our understanding of the current support provided to newcomers by sport and recreation service providers in the local area. This provides the opportunity to build upon the insight gained pursuing the broader-based provincial comparison of publically available sources associated with Objective 1.

Method:

The methodology used to achieve this objective involved interviews with providers of sport and recreation activities. The interviews consisted of a variety of questions to determine what providers are doing to service the public and if there are any particular practices used to engage newcomers. The interviews were conducted via telephone from August 1/2011 to August 23/2011.

There were three sets of questions used in the interviews. The first set of questions gathered information about the organization, the programs offered and the most generally demanded programs. The second set of questions was directed at how well the services were used by newcomers. These questions explored any specific programs offered to newcomers directly and if there were any barriers associated with providing the programs. There was also an opinion question on the role of sport and recreation as a means to assist integration of newcomers to the community. The third topic asked about the promotion of services including how the community was informed about the services offered and the extent to which the internet was used as a promotional vehicle.

Five organizations in the community were interviewed. These organizations were recruited through a list of sports and recreation organizations in the community and contacted via email or telephone to request an interview. There was a variety of organizations interviewed including those offering summer and winter sport/recreation activities and sport/recreation activities associated with different cultural origins.

Findings:

The results of this study are provided in three sections. First, the interviews provide insight about the services offered in the North Bay area. Second, the responses are utilized to identify the use of sport and recreation services by newcomers. Third, the interviews with sports and recreation service providers highlight some of the promotion practices of their services.

Background/Services Offered: The first topic of determining the backgrounds showed that four of the organizations offered competitive and recreational classes. Recreational services were the more highly demanded programs. These organizations also offered classes for the various age groups. Lessons were offered by all organizations with some

offering free day trials. All organizations had specific children's programs. Half of the organizations interviewed offered separate classes for male and female but also offered mixed classes. All organizations offered special rates and special classes for schools (i.e. elementary, high school, college and university). Most organizations did not work directly with other organizations to deliver their services but some had ties to government organizations.

"We do not work entirely with other organizations but we do get funding to help make our programs more affordable to some families."

"We work with Big Brothers and Big Sisters to bring children to our facility"

"(Organization) works with schools to bring in gym classes"

Newcomer Services: The second topic was directed to the services offered specifically to newcomers. The goal was to identify some successful programs or practices as well as highlighting some challenges. The interviews did not yield any best practices as the interview participants could not profile any specific programs offered for newcomers. All of the organizations pursued a strategy of open access to their programs for the entire community. However, respondents acknowledged that language was a noteworthy barrier to accessing their programs.

"Language is the only main barrier; we try to use all available resources to help."

"No major issues. Language is the only challenge and we try to meet any needs with interpreters if needed."

"Nothing sport particular, cost and language can be factors though."

While there was a general consensus on the linguistic barrier, one organization cited cost as a major barrier. The respondent acknowledged the high cost of memberships for participation and lamented that there was no way to eliminate this barrier for newcomers.

"Cost is the biggest barrier, with equipment and membership fees it is about \$1000 for two people"

Although there are challenges, the interviewees unanimously responded that sport and recreation activities assist the integration of newcomers. Respondents perceive their organizations as providing a way for newcomers to get involved in the community and learn the local culture. In addition, they believe newcomers are able to feel more involved and feel more comfortable within the community. The programs also offer a good way for building social networks. Children are able to meet new friends outside of school or help reinforce previous friendships. Parents also benefit from the social network as they can meet other parents while they are watching their children participate. Sport and recreation programs also offer a way for newcomers to practice new languages they have learned. It also gives an exposure to slang and common terms used within the culture.

“The social aspect of sports gives opportunities for networking and language practice.”

“Definitely helps with integration. Language skills are used by both kids and parents, provides networking opportunities and cultural situations.”

Promotional Practices: Reflecting the lack of newcomer specific programming, the interviews did not provide examples of newcomer targeting for any of the organizations in the sample. The organizations all used similar promotional methods embracing a low cost model incorporating mainstream media (i.e. radio ads, flyers, print ads and articles in the Nugget were used by all organizations) and the Internet.

“Nothing separate for newcomers. Seasonal flyers, Nugget advertisements, website and newspaper articles are our largest promotional tools”

“Website, weekly articles in the Nugget, Facebook group, and any free methods”

“We use our website, Facebook, and an email list to keep our clients informed. We also take advantage of Gateway advertising and the Nugget.”

While similar promotional vehicles were selected among the respondent organizations, there were some unique variations worth highlighting. For instance, a couple of organizations used free community bulletins and advertised within the school system while another two organizations used social media (e.g. Facebook) to advertise their services.

“We use bulletin boards in schools to attract kids’ attention to our programs”

“Our Facebook group is used to keep current members up to date and advertise to new clients”

“Facebook is largely used among our younger members; we keep our facilities conditions up to date on our Facebook page”

The organizations sampled all used websites to advertise but also for transaction related activities (e.g. registration). The low costs associated with an Internet presence was seen as positive, particularly when compared against the high cost of advertising in traditional media.

“Website is kept up to date and used for online registration”

“Our website is used for registering and we are increasing our email frequency”

“Program information, contact information and registration is all on the website”

“Free methods are how we advertise; TV and radio ads are too expensive”

Newcomers Participation: While several interviewees stated that it was difficult for their organizations to track the usage of their services by newcomers, two respondents stated the opposite and declared that newcomers had increased significantly over the past year. The smaller organizations seemed better able to assess this metric through close tracking of their membership.

“It is hard to track how well our services are received by newcomers”

“They (services) are probably received well but we do not keep track”

“High increase last year, we had five newcomers join”

“Higher increase over the past year, more newcomers using our lesson services”

Of particular note is the fairly typical practice of trialability as it may be helpful to newcomers. Several organizations offer free trials and/or lessons allowing people to try a sport or recreational activity without paying an immediate cost. This may interest newcomers because it enables a learning opportunity for a poorly understood activity. Therefore, trialability and lessons may lower this accessibility barrier.

“The (organization) offers free lessons for the first six weeks at the start of the summer”

“We offer a free class to let people understand what we do and how it is done”

Summary: While there are no specific services for newcomers, some regular programs and accommodations exist and may assist newcomers to participate in sport and recreation activities. The linguistic barrier can be large for newcomers but most organizations are willing to assist with the resources available to them. Trialability is an important practice for sport and recreation organizations as it may assist newcomers to build an understanding of and comfort with the activity. In terms of promotion, most organizations do not cross promote with other sport and recreation providers so this may represent an opportunity to target specific groups together. Respondents indicate a reliance on traditional media along with their own website. Low cost promotional methods are favoured with some organizations using social media.

Recommendations

This report provides some initial guidance for the NNN and local community in terms of possible actions and programs that could be considered to overcome barriers and improve the integration experienced through sport and recreation activities. It is hoped that this report encourages more dialogue within the community to find ways of improving sport and recreation related integration.

There are opportunities for the NNN to facilitate integration or networking among sport and recreation providers and newcomers themselves. For instance, the awareness level of sports and recreation activities was found to be poor. Therefore, the NNN and the North Bay Multicultural Centre may be a useful focal point for information and registration for local sport and recreation events. Further, the NNN or the Multicultural Centre may provide a central meeting point for ride sharing that is easily accessible by transit to overcome the potential transportation barrier that was often cited by newcomers.

While weak comprehension of locally dominant sport and recreation activities was highlighted as a major barrier, the NNN could work to develop a local sports and recreation culture around certain activities that are more familiar to newcomers in the North Bay community. For example, the NNN could establish and/or maintain a cricket league that is open to the public to utilize it as a basis for integration. Further, cricket may be a good choice as the sport simply requires some open park space and few pieces of equipment.

The NNN may also consider being a conduit of successful practices to other sport and recreation service providers. The NNN could celebrate local success stories through an achievement award to garner media attention and local interest. This may encourage the adoption of identified best practices with other providers in the area. Further, success stories from other regions could be shared with local providers through the NNN.

This report also highlights opportunities for local organizations to engage local newcomers in sport and recreation activities. This report reinforces the call made by the GetActive Toronto Report (2011) for more family-based opportunities. In addition, few sport and recreation service providers in the smaller cities of Ontario seem to provide childcare which can greatly inhibit the ability of parents to participate in adult events. Organizations should strive to find ways of incorporating childcare as part of their offerings as appropriate.

Local sport and recreation providers are encouraged to continue the tactic of offering free trials or lessons. This seems to be a very valuable offering for newcomers as a means to overcome perceptual, comprehension and comfort barriers associated with exposure to new sport and recreation activities.

Organizations are also encouraged to explore opportunities to promote their services using social media. These sites offer an inexpensive and relatively accessible way to reach out to newcomers and assist in the development of local social networks for newcomers. Some organizations are currently using Facebook and Twitter as a

means to create awareness and communicate with their members. In addition, this promotional/interaction channel is useful to connect with younger newcomers and/or the youth in newcomer families.

Finally, to echo the call from the GetActive Toronto Report (2011) for more partnerships among organizations, local North Bay sport and recreation providers might consider ways of packaging their offerings together in a “sampling” package to encourage trialability or in a complimentary season approach (e.g. winter sport provider to partner with a summer sport provider). While trialability was previously commented upon, the complimentary season approach has the added advantage of encouraging the development of social networks among newcomers and others as a group or team could stay together across seasons. Further, partnerships could be arranged as sponsorships by local or regional businesses to enable sport and recreation providers to reduce participation costs for newcomers.

Reference List

- Alamenciak, T. (2011, May 24). Diversity a factor in raising fitness levels among Toronto's young. *Globe and Mail* .
- Allen, J. T., Drane, D. D., Byon, K. K., & Mohn, R. S. (2010). Sport as a vehicle for socialization and maintenance of cultural identity: International students attending American universities. *Sport Management Review* , 421-434.
- Armstrong, K. L., & Stratta, T. M. (2004). Market Analyses of Race and Sport Consumption. *Sport Marketing Quarterly* , Vol 13, pp 7-16.
- Beri, R. (2004). My Mom the hockey fan. *Macleans* , p. 44.
- Blatchford, A. (2011, June 22). Hijab-wearing teen ref red-carded. *Toronto Star* , p. A7.
- Burdsey, D. (2008). Contested conceptions of identity, community and multiculturalism in the staging of alternative sport events: a case study of the Amsterdam World Cup football tournament. *Leisure Studies* , Vol. 27, No. 3, pp 259-277.
- CBC News. (2007, March 13). *CBC News*. Retrieved May 4, 2011, from CBC.
- Daskalos, C. T. (2007). Locals Only! The Impact of Modernity on a Local Surfing Context. *Sociological Perspectives* , Vol 50, Issue 1, pp 155-173.
- George, U. (2002). A needs-based model for settlement service delivery for newcomers to Canada. *International Social Work* , 45 (4), 465-480.
- Get ACTIVE Toronto. (2011). *Report on Physical Activity*. Toronto.

- Krahn, H., Derwing, T. M., & Abu-Laban, B. (2005). The Retention of Newcomers in Second- and Third-Tier Canadian Cities. *International Migration Review* , Vol. 39 Issue 4, p872-894, 23p.
- Lee, Y.-S., & Funk, D. C. (2011). Recreational Sport Participation and Migrants' Acculturation. *Managing Leisure* , Volume 16, p 1-16.
- Lim, S., Warner, S., Dixon, M., Berg, B., Kim, C., & Newhouse-Bailey, M. (2011). Sport participation across national contexts: A multilevel investigation of individual and systemic influences on adult sport participation. *European Sport Management Quarterly* , 11 (3), 197-224.
- Liu, Y.-D. (2009). Sport and social inclusion: Evidence from the performance of public leisure facilities. *Social Indicators Research* , 90 (2), 325-337.
- Mean, L. J., & Halone, K. K. (2010). Sport, Language, and Culture: Issues and Intersections. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* , 29 (3), 253-260.
- Omidvar, R. (2010, June). The "Beautiful Game" is Toronto's Game! *Maytree Opinion* .
- Pons, F., Laroche, M., Nyeck, S., & Perreault, S. (2001). Role of Sporting Events as Ethnoculture's Emblems: Impact of Acculturation and Ethnic Identity on Consumers' Orientation Toward Sporting Events. *Sport Marketing Quarterly* , Vol 10. No. 4. pp 231-240.
- Stewart, M., Anderson, J., Beiser, M., Mwakarimba, E., Neufeld, A., Simich, L., et al. (2008). Multicultural Meanings of Social Support among Immigrants and Refugees. *International Migration* , Vol. 46 Issue 3 p123-159, 37p.
- Stodolska, M., & Alexandris, K. (2004). The Role of Recreational Sport in the Adaptation of First Generation Immigrants in the United States. *Journal of Leisure Research* , Vol 36, No. 3, pp 379-413.
- Vilhjalmsson, R., & Thorlindsson, T. (1992). The integrative and physiological effects of sport participation: A study of adolescents. *The Sociological Quarterly* , 33 (4), 637-647.
- Walton-Roberts, M. (2005). Regional immigration and dispersal: Lessons from small and medium sized urban centres in British Columbia. *Canadian Ethnic Studies* , 37 (3), 12-34.