

SPORT SCRAPS: The Changing Face of Sport

By **Ron Weese**

Diversity. Inclusion. Integration. Segregation.
Immigrants. Newcomers.

Words that are often charged with emotion, underpinned
by human rights and based on both philosophy and sociology. They are also being
discussed at length in sport.

The Aurora Sport Plan identifies 'the Participant' as
a key focus of attention and within this focus of course is the recognition of
the growing diversity of our residents.

Sport Aurora has done significant research into the
changing demographics of our community as part of our Sport Plan role. This
research is essential in order to complete the 'environmental scan' of our
local society and then make suggestions based on facts about what kind of
services and opportunities exist and what are needed for our changing
population.

Research suggests that by 2030 immigration is
projected to account for all of population growth. In Aurora, we now know that 1,850
newcomers settled here between 2011 and 2016; 31% from China, 13% from Iran and
about 11% from the Philippines. We know that almost 30% of our residents were
born outside of Canada and that of the entire population, just under 50% are
aged 45 years or older. While Agencies of all kinds work to embrace and include
newcomers, what is sport to do?

Consultations have taken place with stakeholder groups
and experts relative to sport and diversity such as the Canadian
Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, the Cities of Markham and Richmond Hill,
the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, Immigrant Services in
Newmarket and the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sports.

Of course, our partner at Sport for Life
has published 'Creating Inclusion of Newcomers in Sport and Physical Activity'.
There is no shortage of resources, no shortage of information on engagement and
certainly there is a changing demographic.

The recommendations for this changing face
of sport are clearly stated:

The Town of Aurora should undertake
similar research to Town of Markham to ensure that a full understanding of the
needs and interests of the diverse residents in Aurora are known.

Sport Aurora and the Town of Aurora should

partner to develop a Diversity Program & Service Framework that will sufficiently support all Town sport and recreation programs and initiatives.

Sport should implement ?Try-It? sport days that offer free opportunities for newcomers to engage in local sport activities.

Training should be delivered through the Canadian Association for the Advancement for Women in Sport Workshop - Making Healthy Connections with Racialized Communities ? as a stand-alone training for the following target groups:

Town of Aurora recreation staff

Sport Aurora staff and volunteers

Activate Aurora staff and volunteers

Local Sport Organization administrators
(and coaches who are interested in participating)

Likewise training workshops from the Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion are available that provide diversity and inclusion fundamentals.

So, who builds an inclusive sport environment in Aurora? Our volunteer-driven, sport Organizations have the will but do not have the resources for this. They are busy providing sport services and have enough to do keeping costs low and delivering high-quality experiences to those who look to them for sport participation. Engagement of newcomers who may have language and other cultural barriers to overcome, is a difficult task; one that requires special knowledge and skill.

Sport Aurora's view is that sport and healthy physical activity includes everyone. If it doesn't, we as a Community are not doing what we should for the changing face of sport. It is time for all of us to learn how to be more inclusive and engaging, so every Auroran has equal opportunities to experience the benefits of sport and physical activity.

To learn more about the Culture and Diversity recommendations in the Sport Plan or how you can get involved, please Contact Us at www.sportaurora.ca