



Newcomer Engagement & Inclusion

**A Guide for Creating a Welcoming Space
through Soccer**

Newcomer Engagement & Inclusion

Creating a Welcoming Space through Soccer

This guide is designed to give the reader ideas of how to create an inclusive and welcoming space through soccer. The ideas put forth are set up in a way to inspire a collective response in increasing active involvement and participation of newcomers in sports. In order to be successful in creating an inclusive and welcoming environment, one has to understand what is meant by inclusivity.

An inclusive community is where people from all backgrounds and cultures feel genuinely included, welcomed and valued. By engaging people from all backgrounds and cultures, the soccer community's capacity will expand to provide more authentic services and experiences for all participants. It is important to lead with genuine intention in order to create successful and sustainable outcomes.

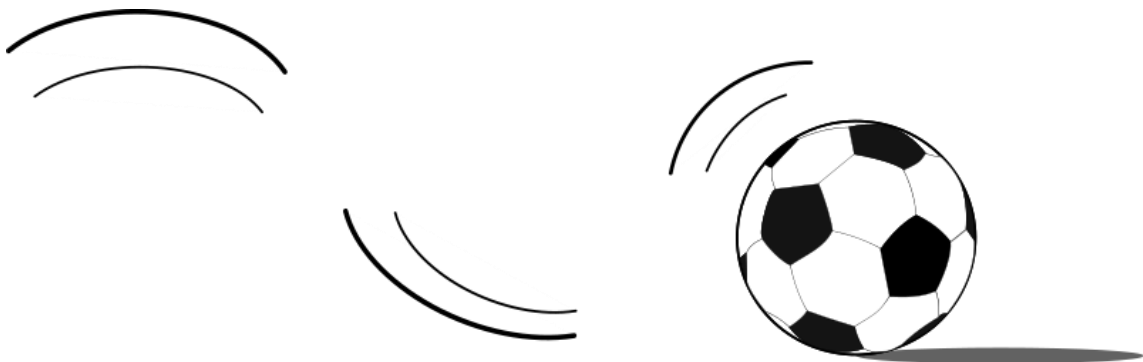
It is undeniable that Saskatchewan is the most diverse it has ever been, and it is only going to get more diverse as time progresses. We are very fortunate to be living in such a diverse community. But do we know how lucky we are? Do we know how to leverage this diversity? Can Saskatchewan residents leverage our natural inclination to be welcoming and create genuine, meaningful and sustainable intercultural relationships? The answer is, yes. Can it be done through sport? Absolutely.

Choosing to prioritize the importance of cultural diversity and respecting the process to implement changes will result in the creation of a welcoming space that is truly inclusive and that will create a lasting impact for all involved. Remember, no one person solely represents their culture or country. We are all individuals.



Five Step Game Plan:

- 1) Soccer as an agent for diversity.
- 2) Soccer as an agent for sport.
- 3) Soccer as an agent for accessibility.
- 4) Soccer as an agent for belonging.
- 5) Soccer as an agent for community.



Soccer as an Agent for Diversity

In order to be considered an agent for diversity, it is important to understand the basis of diversity through increased cultural awareness. Diversity, as a term, refers to all types of differences found in society. For the purpose of this guide, diversity is being used within the context of inter-cultural diversity. How we interact with each other on a day to day basis is an indicator of how open we are to learning from people with diverse backgrounds from our own.

Soccer offers the opportunity for people who may not otherwise interact on a daily basis, come together with a shared commonality. Whether we attend games to support our children, partners, grandchildren, ... or if we are there to play, we gather with the same goal in mind. We are there for soccer. Something as simple of congregating at the same location for the same amount of time offers up opportunities for diversity.

Which types of newcomers come to Saskatchewan?

Newcomer Status

Immigrant:

a person who has chosen to settle permanently in another country.

Refugee:

a person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country.

Permanent Resident:


a person granted the right to live permanently in Canada.

International Student:

a person who pays tuition while temporarily studying in another country.

Temporary Foreign Worker:

a person who has a work visa in order to legally work in a different country.



Increase cultural knowledge and awareness by educating yourself about the people that live in your community. Simply having some background on cultural difference can help create more inclusion. Be genuine when asking questions. Rely on individual interactions, not assumptions.

Customs: Customs are as diverse as people.

The following are some examples of cultural customs:

- Physical contact
- Greetings
- Stance & Body Language
- Eye Contact & Conversation

History: Where a person came from and how they got to Saskatchewan can be a story that makes a difference between wanting to belong and wanting to be ignored. It is important to be mindful that previous experiences may be blocking future interactions.

Language: Be mindful of the language used when interacting. Try incorporating some other languages in promotional material or even in interacting at a game or practice.

Religion: There are many different religions in the world. There are also many denominations within one religion. Take some time to learn the days of worship, religious beliefs and practices.

Holidays: Every country and culture have their own holidays whether they are national celebrations or religious holydays. Consider these holidays when planning and scheduling.

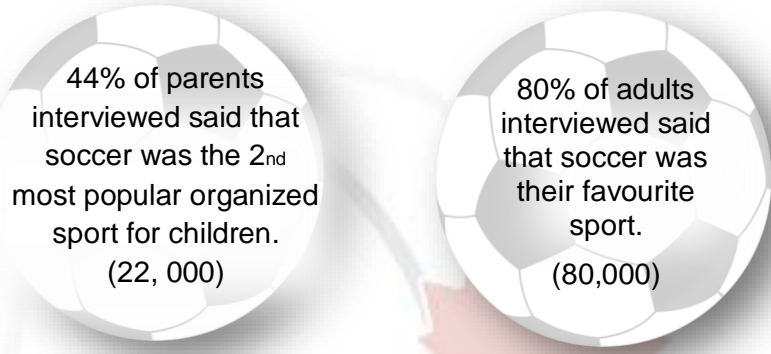
Food: Knowing dietary restrictions are helpful ways to create an inclusive environment.

Females: Universal equality does not exist, and it can look different depending on where you live. Cultural beliefs and religious practices may hinder participation.

Families: Familial composition is diverse. It is helpful to know family dynamics when trying to increase involvement.

Soccer as an Agent for Sport

Sport acts as a catalyst for health, comradery and unification. Soccer is THE most popular sport in the world. It is universally accessible and recognized. According to a national survey done by the Institute for Canadian Citizenship:



44% of parents interviewed said that soccer was the 2nd most popular organized sport for children.
(22, 000)


80% of adults interviewed said that soccer was their favourite sport.
(80,000)

The Institute interviewed 100,000 new citizens and concluded that “soccer is the overwhelming favourite.” If ever there was a sport used as an agent for creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, it is soccer. Sport has the ability to teach Canadian culture in a way that classrooms and distance learning cannot.

Overcoming the barrier of unfamiliarity is not something soccer needs to do. However, there are some barriers that exist that get in the way of participation. Consider what you can do to help work through these barriers.

Structure & The Registration Process: Take a moment and think about how soccer is organized here. Professional or organized sports in Canada are structured and complex. Knowing where and how to register, and who is in charge of what can be confusing. Keep in mind that some people come from places where “pickup” soccer is the norm, which is the complete opposite of organized sport.

Regulations: We have a lot of rules for our sports. Finding out what age group, division, zone or community you belong to can all be very intimidating. What sort of experience is needed to play, to coach or to referee? What training is necessary to do all of those things? Reading regulations can be daunting for a Canadian born English speaker, never mind someone new to the community and still learning English.



Time & Commitment: Understanding the time and commitment involved in the whole process can also be challenging. People view time differently and levels of commitment can depend on a whole number of factors. The best way to avoid conflict is to have clear communication before things escalate.

Information Dissemination: Not knowing where to look is disheartening as it leads to lost interest. It is easy to say, “*look on the website*”, but that comes with its own hardships. We are all inundated with information overload and if you can’t find a way to organize the chaos than it is near impossible to find what you are looking for. Finding ways to simplify the information would result in higher participation rates. Getting creative with disseminating the information is another way to boost interest.

Fees: Cost can be a barrier even with the supports we have in place. Having to figure out registration forms can be difficult for a fluent English speaker. Consider ways to help people fill out registration forms.

Skill Levels: People hesitate to get involved in something where they may not have the right skill set. Figuring out where you belong, in terms of ability, can be difficult without knowing where to go for help.

Uniforms: Access to uniforms may be a hindrance for some people. The equipment needed is far less than, hockey or dance, but still can be cumbersome. Some people want to fit in by wearing what is expected, while others expect people to look the part. Either way acceptance is sought. People need to know where to buy what they are looking for and what sort of options are available to them. Keep in mind that soccer fields around the world are different. Turf may not be familiar to everyone and knowing which boots or cleats to wear may not be known.

Gender: In some parts of the world females and males don’t play together. In other parts, females aren’t given the chance to play sports. Allotments may need to be made to find ways to include more females in soccer.

Friendship: If you don’t know anyone or everyone you know does not want to play soccer, it can be difficult to get involved. It can be hard to join a team on your own. Creating connections with other like-minded people make all the difference in feeling welcomed and part of a team.

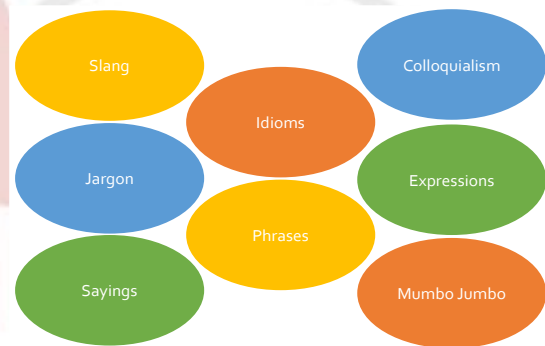
Soccer as an Agent for Accessibility

Getting ready for anything is a process. It is important to be mindful of the obstacle that can exist when trying to get ready for soccer. Knowledge alone is not enough. However, combining knowledge with action leads to successful results. Successful results make soccer an agent for accessibility. Even making a couple changes with any of the topics below can make a huge difference for the people benefiting from the actions taken.

Language: Language has the powerful ability to build self-confidence or tear it down. Time and effort spent making things easier to understand is always worth it. Language is a daunting obstacle to overcome. Fluency, comprehension and speaking ability varies.

Avoid using any of the following when trying to convey information.

Alternatively, when trying to help someone get used to Canadian culture, the following is a great tool for teaching how to talk like a local.



Communication: Use varied forms of communication. Do not rely solely on email, Facebook or your website. You may need to employ the old method of calling someone.

Successful Communication



Be Clear & Concise



Be Direct




Be Patient



Be Friendly

Whether you are trying to convey information or trying to help someone learn some local slang, if you follow these communication tips you will be successful in achieving your goal.




Names: Our names are an important part of our identity. It is up to us as individuals to change our names if we so choose. It is not up to society to do so. Be mindful of the importance of a name. When you meet someone ask them how to pronounce their name. Ask again if you need. It's better to ask than to say it wrong or avoid saying it entirely. If you have the opportunity, write it down phonetically so you can remember. It may be appropriate to ask if they have a nickname or another preferred name they use. Listen and watch for how they respond to that question. Never decide for them.

Family Dynamics: A previously mentioned, family dynamics are diverse. Many cultures live in multigenerational families where grandparents or uncles and aunts live together. It is common in these families for grandparents to be in charge of childcare when the parents are working. Often the grandparents do not know how to use public transportation, do not drive or there are no vehicles available to take grandchildren to activities. Another possible dynamic, is where the older children in the household are in charge of taking care of younger siblings and even grandparents. It makes it difficult for them to partake in their activities or take their siblings to activities on their own. Perhaps offering complimentary or subsidized baby-sitting services may help increase participation.

Financial Constraints & Discretionary Spending: As individuals, we all have the ability to choose how we spend our own money. Something that one person values does not mean another person will value it as well. People already invested in soccer know the immense value of the sport and of sports in general. Many people do not understand or care to agree that there is a lot of value in sport. Just because it looks like people have money to spend doesn't mean they do or that they value spending it on sports. It's not the end game, but it is an obstacle.

Physical Contact: Be mindful of cultural and religious customs in regard to touch and interaction. Bowing, shaking hands, hugging, cheek kissing are all appropriate greetings, however they are not all appropriate for every culture. Even addressing people is different. There are regulations for making eye contact, using surnames and speaking to men and women. Do not take offense if the way you greet someone is not considered acceptable. Learn before the interaction and learn after the interaction. It just takes practice and the ability to adapt.



Schedule: Be mindful of significant days of worship and offer alternative days for participation. Perhaps it's possible to change the schedule all together in honour of the celebration. It may require some skillful reorganizing. Consider offering the same workshop on different days at different locations.

Location: Consider having practices, games and events in different parts of the community or using shared civic facilities like schools and civic centres whenever possible. This would help alleviate some transportation challenges and create important partnerships. This is likely already being done in most communities. Think about what could be changed to increase accessibility.

Transportation: Transportation may be limiting. People may not know how to drive, or they don't feel comfortable driving. Or perhaps they do know how to drive, but their English is not strong enough to pass the driving tests or maybe they do not have access to a vehicle for practice. It's also possible that the family only have one vehicle. Perhaps learning the bus system is a daunting undertaking or maybe that's not even an option in their town or village. Local community members could consider offering carpooling to help families attend soccer practices, games and events. Newcomers likely would not think of this as an option. This would be up to the local to initiate. Be willing to accept various methods of gratitude from the families you help as they may not be able to offer carpooling in return. Perhaps your club is able to offer bus tickets. Selling them at a discount will make them more accessible and provide a bit of an incentive as opposed to giving them away for free.

Volunteering: Saskatchewan is famous for the amount of volunteer work we do. It's in our blood and we are very proud of our giving culture. Volunteering is not globally recognized. It is also not necessary defined the same way in countries that do have volunteering as a concept. Therefore, there is a lot of educating that may need to happen in order to boost volunteer involvement with newcomers. Once it is understood it can pay off in dividends.

Soccer as an Agent for Belonging

According to the Institute for Canadian Citizenship Playing Together National Study, more than 80,000 people surveyed felt more “connected to their community by watching their kids play or volunteer with the team”. There are many ways that soccer offers opportunities for belonging. Involving parents has always been a great way to boost interest and increase longevity in the sport. There’s no difference in involving Canadian-born parents and newcomer parents. One may take a bit more time and creativity but they both result in equally effective and sustainable participation.

Volunteering: Volunteering is an effective method of integration. It’s a financially accessible opportunity for newcomers to get a first-hand experience understanding Canadian culture. It’s a reciprocal opportunity for the volunteer and the organization. This may be a more labour intensive process, but it is worth the effort.

Coaching & Refereeing: Consider what you can do to offer attainable courses for English learners. Think about the time commitment involved, the days of the week, the times and holidays that may interfere with learning. Are there areas of the course that can be simplified so that the information can be comprehended enough to pass? Is it possible to bring an interpreter to help with the process? Keep in mind the interpreter can only be used to amplify success not stifle learning progression.

Mentoring: When matching a mentor with a mentee it is vital to spend time finding the best possible match. Mentorship can be used in various ways. There can be mentors that help with volunteering, coaching, referring, playing or even to get paired up to help understand the game as it is played. Youth mentors can be paired with young newcomers to help foster a greater sense of community, friendship and belonging. It will also help share different skill sets. Creating suitable matches means success for all.

Keep in mind the following:

- ⚽ Level of assistance the mentee needs and the amount of time the mentor can provide.
- ⚽ Are there any cultural or religious impediments to this match?
- ⚽ The goals of the mentee and the mentor need to align or at least be complimentary
- ⚽ Language skills
- ⚽ Try to find at least two or three shared interests or commonalities

Soccer as an Agent for Community



“I think there are a lot of things that soccer does in the communities that transcend the soccer field.” Brandi Denise Chastain

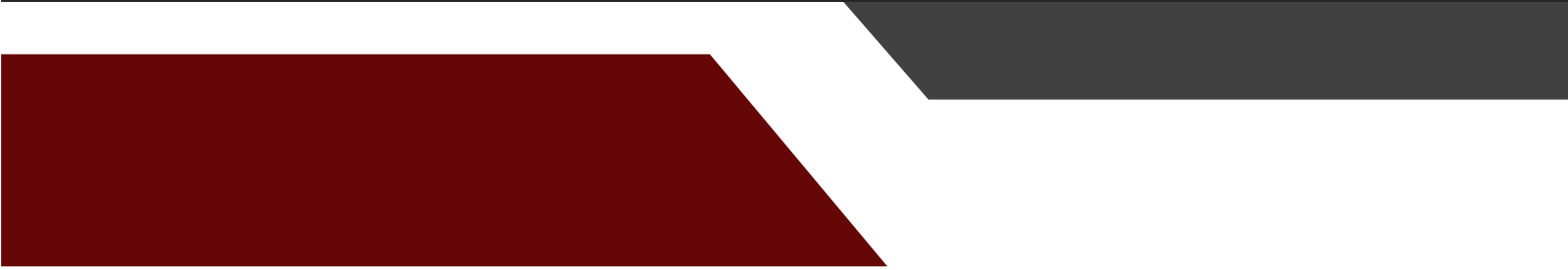
Brandi Chastain, a two-time FIFA Women's World Cup champion, two-time Olympic gold-medalist, coach, and sports broadcaster from the US knew the power of her beloved sport. Soccer was built to be an agent for community. The key to building a community is by creating opportunities that appeal to numerous people. Community events build capacity for successful intercultural engagement. People are always looking for creative and traditional ways to engage and enjoy themselves. Why not have soccer at the center of all events?

Creating soccer centered community events allows people to learn about Canadian culture while participating in a familiar sport. It builds confidence and inclusion. A few ideas of how to get creative with soccer and community building. Some ideas may be new while others may be a friendly reminder of something that was done before that could be done again. Either way, get creative with old or new, they both work well.

Music & Food: Music and food, enough said. These are two standalone components that always make for a great time. Have a potluck, have an open mike night. Have both together. Include these at all the other events.

Futsal Focus: Have some events focused entirely on futsal and the skill set it brings the game. It's a chance to feature something new or something familiar that people didn't even know existed in Saskatchewan. Futsal is a fast-paced and skillful game that can be used as a developmental tool or as a stand-alone sport. Additionally, include futsal in other events to show the range of soccer sports.

Skills Pageant: Just like it sounds, hold a pageant and have participants dress up in their favourite team jerseys, or their own team jerseys or another theme. Have people show various skills and have an opportunity for audience participation. A fun way to blend fashion with sport. This would be a good opportunity to show some futsal skills.



Soccer Festival: In Saskatchewan we are definitely experienced in organizing festivals. Why not have an All Things Soccer Festival. People will come dressed up with their favourite team colours. There can be food and beverages specific to the countries represented. Team chants can be introduced and taught to the masses. Participants can have the opportunity to sing their national anthem before each game. Perhaps having some interpreters would be helpful.


Singles Night: Not everyone knows someone who plays soccer. This could be singles night in terms of romance and sport or just in terms of come meet some likeminded people who love the Beautiful Game. People are looking to play in something different than professional leagues and bar leagues.

Sports and Language Classes: Give people an opportunity to understand the Beautiful Game in English or in general, by offering soccer and sport language classes. Teach soccer specific words in a classroom setting or even better, on the field as the action happens. Make learning fun and appealing to all ages and levels. Empowering people with the right rules builds confidence and can lead to varies levels of participation beyond players such as coaches, referees or parent volunteers. Don't forget to include languages besides English to increase belonging. Have participants share a few words in their own language for others to hear and use.

THE Game Night: Whether it's gathering to watch the World Cup, Olympics soccer, Champions League or any other soccer tournament or anticipated match, do it in celebratory style. Create a mini-folkfest or mosaic and feature food and entertainment from the top teams competing for glory. Hold the event at a community hall for all ages and have local and international youth create displays about their favourite teams and the countries they represent.

Family Face-Off: Have families play against other families. Make it multi-generational. Have it as a stand-alone fun night or part of a tournament. Consider giving out essential items as prizes. Bus tickets, baby-sitting vouchers, membership, lessons, uniforms...

Celebrity Show Down: Invite local celebrities to play against each other and against non-celebrity teams. Being a member of an audience can be as interactive and meaningful as being a player. Perhaps global celebrities could come and help raise money for future programming or soccer essentials.



Females First: If your soccer club has a goal of increasing female involvement perhaps having a female only soccer tournament may be needed. Make it unexpected and exciting by having music played and female only audience members. That's a bit different than normal. Invite community leaders and businesses that offer female centered programming to showcase their products at the event.

Walking Soccer for All: Consider an event that focuses on accessibility for seniors, people with health and mobility issues or for anyone that prefers a slower paced game. This is a great opportunity to bring grandkids together with grandparents. They can play on the same team or against each other. Walking soccer has a multi-generational appeal that gets the whole family moving.

International Soccer Trivia: Trivia nights are so much fun. Making it an international trivia night and more people will participate. Soccer is played all over the world, so ideas for questions are endless. Having multiple choice increases the odds of participation. Considering adding a twist to the game that encourages more active or passive participation. Perhaps people can try to act out the answers or draw like Charades or Pictionary trivia style.

Community Cup: If you already do this, find ways to increase involvement. Try adding something new. Perhaps there are ideas above that can be added to your existing community cup. If you have not done a community cup, they are a fantastic way to build connections and increase interest in soccer.

Partnerships: Reaching out to various organizations, business and community facilities, are always a great way to boost reachability and accessibility. Remember to connect with school boards, community centers, libraries and sport businesses that share a vested interest in your membership. Whether you live in a large or small city or town, there are settlement organizations that would love to partner on various initiatives. There are restaurants and non-sport businesses that may also be interested in forming temporary or long-lasting partnerships. Create workplace-based soccer teams and games.

Soccer in the Community: Connect with newcomer centers in your community and ask if there's some way soccer can be incorporated in one or two of their cultural events. Ask if soccer players could come and volunteer at an event merely to experience something different.

The Importance of Adapting

When should we adapt to another culture and when is doing so inauthentic or worse yet, insulting? Clearly there are times we must adapt to different cultures. However, what do we do when it's not clear whom should be doing the adapting. Adapting successfully to situations can make all the difference in the outcomes you are trying to achieve. Knowing when, where and how to adapt is an important skill set to develop. Like all things worth doing, it takes practice. Here are some questions that can help you get into the right mindset to adapt.



The Adaptation Checklist

- ✓ If I choose to adapt will I compromise myself?
- ✓ How can I best express my intentions?
- ✓ Does adapting mean more to me or them?
- ✓ Will adapting achieve the desired outcome?

Recommendations from the Institute for Canadian Citizenship Playing Together National Study

Provide discounts on tickets, membership, lessons and practices.

Recruit leaders as ambassadors for their community.

Create a booklet for games that use both words and pictures to explain the rules and positions.

Build partnerships.

Offer free tickets to games or special events.

Final Thoughts

Implementing these tips will help achieve the goal of creating successful intercultural engagement through the sport of soccer. Of course, these skills go beyond the field, however this guide is about soccer. Therefore, soccer gets the spotlight it deserves and has been proven it is:

- ⚽ An agent for diversity.
- ⚽ An agent for sport.
- ⚽ An agent for accessibility.
- ⚽ An agent for belonging.
- ⚽ An agent for community.

Tips for Successful Intercultural Engagement

- ✓ Recognize that all people are individuals
- ✓ Approach intercultural engagement with an open-mind
- ✓ Lead with true intentions
- ✓ Be mindful of your knowledge
- ✓ Create inclusion by adapting

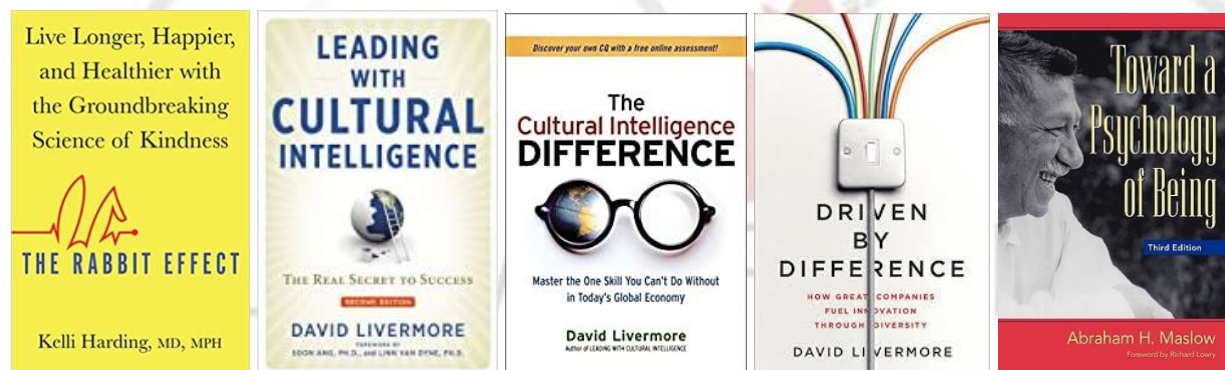


Resources

Some of the following resources were used as reference for this guide and others are included as possibilities for further reading.

Institute for Canadian Citizenship <https://www.inclusion.ca/about/>

- ⚽ Playing together – new citizens, sports & belonging (national study)
https://www.inclusion.ca/site/uploads/2016/10/PlayingTogether_FullR-Online_Final.pdf
- ⚽ The 6 Degrees Dictionary, a user's guide to inclusion.
<https://www.6degreesto.com/dictionary/>



- Images on pages 1, 2, 5, 11, 15 & 16 used in this manual are by Unknown Author and licensed under CC BY-SA.
- Images on title page, page 3, 7, 14 & 16 are the property of Cultural Bridges Inc.

Copyright© 2020 by [Cultural Bridges \(Program\) Inc.](#)

All rights reserved, including the right to reproduce this document or portions thereof in any form whatsoever, without written consent of the copyright holder.

The Newcomer Engagement & Inclusion: A Guide for Creating a Welcoming Space through Soccer was created for the sole use of Saskatchewan Soccer Association (SSA) by [Cultural Bridges \(Program\) Inc.](#) Distribution of this document, outside of the SSA, is strictly prohibited.

For information, please contact [Cultural Bridges](#) at:

Culturally Yours,
Malvina Rapko
Founding Cultural Officer



Contact Information

- Email: malvina@culturalbridges.ca
- [in](#) - Malvina Rapko
- [ig](#) - culturalbridgesinc
- [f](#) - Cultural Bridges Inc.
- Website – culturalbridges.ca