



**Sarnia-Lambton**

**Immigrant Youth Engagement Project**



**Outcomes Report 2015**



# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank:

- The Ontario Ministry of Immigration, Citizenship and International Trade for funding this pilot project and recognizing the value that engaging immigrant children and youth brings to the social and economic well-being of our local communities
- The organizations and groups who provided their input and expertise on the Steering Committee for this project and/or who partnered with IYEP on various events and activities:
  - Boys & Girls Club
  - Sarnia Gives
  - Scouts Canada
  - Lambton College
  - India-Canada Association
  - Sarnia Saints Rugby
  - Tourism Sarnia-Lambton
  - City of Sarnia
  - Lambton County Library
  - Sarnia Muslim Association
  - YMCA learning & Career Centre
  - Lambton Public Health
  - Northern Collegiate Multicultural Awareness Club
  - Sarnia Lambton Local Immigration Partnership
  - Lambton Chinese Canadian Association
- All of the children, youth and families who participated in IYEP and whose comments and thoughts contributed to the writing of this report



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# Introduction

The importance of engaging immigrant children and youth in sport and recreation programming to assist in their settlement and integration process cannot be underestimated. The benefits of increasing their participation in recreation activities is well-documented; positive outcomes include a sense of psycho-social wellbeing, physical wellbeing, opportunities to improve English, and opportunities to gain familiarity with some aspects of Canadian culture.<sup>1</sup> This, in turn, can have positive impacts on the social and economic integration of the entire family.<sup>2</sup>

The Sarnia-Lambton Immigrant Youth Engagement Project (IYEP) began in December 2014 with the intention of reaching out to local immigrant youth as a way to encourage, support and increase their participation in sport and recreation activities. The framework of IYEP's work was based on a set of recommendations from a series of focus groups with immigrant youth organized by the Sarnia-Lambton Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and Lambton Public Health in 2013. The recommendations included: providing diversity training opportunities for coaches, teachers, and administrators of sports teams and recreation programs, establishing an arts-based youth group, encouraging schools to offer non-competitive sport opportunities, promoting current programming to cultural and ethnic groups, and promoting volunteer opportunities locally.<sup>3</sup>

Taking the 6-month timeframe of the pilot into consideration, the project scope focused on two of the above recommendations and included the following objectives:

1. Increase cultural competency among local coaches, recreation leaders and those working with youth
2. Increase immigrant youth and their families' awareness of existing sport and recreation opportunities and programs
3. Increase access to local sport and recreation activities for immigrant children and youth

In order to achieve these objectives, a variety of stakeholders were engaged over the duration of the project including sport organizations, ethno-cultural groups, settlement services, youth-specific service providers, educational institutions and immigrant children and youth and their families. The following report outlines the impact that IYEP and its activities had on these stakeholders and the community at large.

1 Doherty, A. and T. Taylor. *Sport and physical recreation in the settlement of immigrant youth* in *Liesure/Loisir* 31:1, 27-55.

2 Omidvar, R., and T. Richmond. *Perspectives on social inclusion: Immigrant settlement and social inclusion in Canada*. Working Paper Series, Laidlaw Foundation, 2003. Paraschak, Victoria & Tirone, Susan. *Race and Ethnicity in Canadian Sport* in Jane Crossman (ed.), *Canadian Sport Sociology*, Second Edition. Toronto: Thomson Nelson, 2008: 79-98.

3 The full report of the focus group findings can be found here: [http://www.liveinlambton.ca/images/settlement/lip/COL-LIP\\_Youth\\_Focus\\_Group\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.liveinlambton.ca/images/settlement/lip/COL-LIP_Youth_Focus_Group_Report_2013.pdf)





# Cultural Competency in Programs & Services

The capacity to understand, and if necessary accommodate for, cultural differences in local sport, recreation and youth-specific programming creates welcoming and inclusive spaces in which immigrant youth and youth from culturally-diverse backgrounds are able to participate more fully in the community. In order to provide the tools and resources to do this, IYEP organized two separate training sessions aimed at increasing the cultural competency of local organizations. Participant feedback was gathered through surveys at both sessions.

## 1. 'Promoting Diversity in Sport & Physical Activity' Workshop

In partnership with Lambton College's Sport and Recreation Management Program, a trainer from Toronto-based Sport4All Ontario provided a full day session for students and community organizations. Its objectives were to increase participants':

- Knowledge of the barriers facing diverse youth in sport and recreation
- Capacity to serve/accommodate diverse youth by overcoming barriers they face in sport and recreation programming
- Motivation to create an inclusive environment for immigrant and culturally-diverse youth
- Motivation to attract immigrant and culturally-diverse youth to their programs/activities

### Increasing Knowledge & Capacity

Participation in the workshop resulted in significant gains in attendees' knowledge of the barriers facing diverse youth as well as their organizations' capacity to help overcome those barriers:

#### Strong Knowledge of Barriers



#### Strong Capacity to Accommodate Barriers



**100%**

*of respondents agreed they were better equipped to overcome barriers facing diverse youth in sports and recreation programming*



*"This training made me realize that I wasn't aware (of) how much I didn't know."*

*"(The training) was a good reminder that diversity is important and that we need to work on diversity in sport."*

### Supporting & Attracting Culturally-Diverse Youth

This workshop also provided an impetus for participants to attract and support immigrant and culturally-diverse youth in their programming; after the training, survey respondents felt motivated to:

Ensure that my organization/team is more inclusive of diverse youth.

**100%**

**Agree**

Unsure

Attract more immigrant youth to my organization/team's programs.

**94%**

## 2. 'Islam: Challenging Stereotypes, Understanding Diversity' Lunch & Learn

In May, IYEP partnered with Sarnia-Lambton Rebound and the Sarnia-Lambton Children's Aid Society (both youth-focused agencies) to host a Lunch & Learn at the local mosque in order to increase community organizations' ability to support and provide services to Muslims. The objectives of this session were to:

- Increase knowledge of the barriers facing Muslim families when accessing services and programs
- Increase awareness of individuals' assumptions and how they can impact working with Muslim clients and families
- Provide effective approaches for supporting and working with Muslim youth and their families

### Increasing Knowledge & Awareness

After attending the session:

100%

of respondents indicated an increase in their awareness of the barriers facing Muslims seeking services

92%

of respondents reported an increase in their awareness of the impact of cultural/religious stereotypes

100%

of respondents agreed that they developed an awareness of how their assumptions may impact their work

100%

of respondents said they learned something new about Sarnia-Lambton's Muslim community



100%

of respondents indicated that their ability to better support and provide services to the Muslim community increased

92%

of respondents agreed that the session provided them with effective approaches for working with Muslim clients



As a result of attending the session, a number of respondents also rated themselves as having **significant knowledge** (7 & above on a scale of 1 to 10) in the topics covered:

### % of Respondents Significant knowledge of...

34%

Basic Islamic beliefs

42%

Islamic perspective on gender roles and family relationships

58%

Islamic vs. cultural practices

58%

Role of women in Islam

The majority of respondents also positively rated (on a scale of 1 to 10) their knowledge of communication tips for working with Muslim clients:

36%

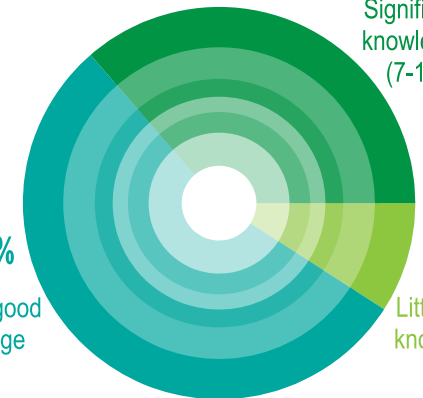
Significant knowledge (7-10)

55%

Some to good knowledge (4-6)

9%

Little to no knowledge (0-3)



### Providing Effective Services

Along with this increased awareness, attendees at the session learned specific approaches for supporting Muslim families. Since attending the Lunch & Learn:

The feedback indicates that through training opportunities and by raising awareness of diversity in sport and recreation programming, IYEP provided the foundation for local organizations to be welcoming and inclusive of immigrant and culturally-diverse children and youth.

# Awareness of Recreation Opportunities

Bringing an awareness of the opportunities available to immigrant and culturally-diverse children and youth is also an important way to engage them in sport and recreation programming locally. Youth cannot participate in programs they do not know exist. To promote current programming, IYEP undertook a number of activities including: hosting a table at MAC Night<sup>4</sup>, organizing a Family Fun Night with the YMCA, organizing a Rugby Fun Day with the Sarnia Saints Rugby, distributing the *Sarnia Community Activities Guide* to local cultural groups and creating a Facebook page. The objectives of these activities were to:

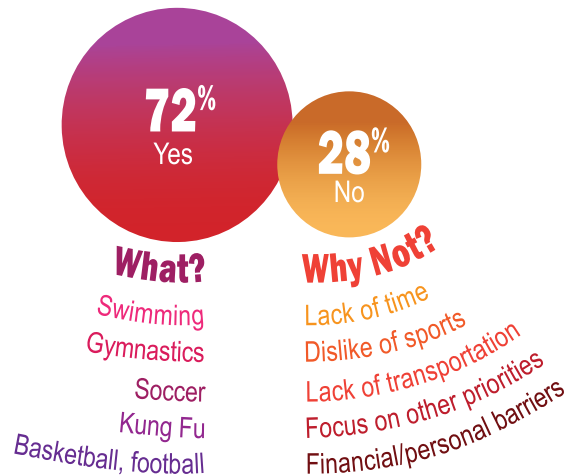
- Gain a better understanding of immigrant children and youth's involvement & interests in sport and recreation programming locally
- Increase immigrant youth's knowledge of sport and recreation opportunities
- Introduce new sport and recreation activities to immigrant and culturally-diverse children and youth

## Current Engagement of Immigrant Youth

Participants at the events organized by IYEP (both youth and their parents) were surveyed in order to gauge their involvement in sport and recreation activities and their recreation interests.

4 The Multicultural Awareness Club (MAC) at a local high school, Northern Collegiate, organizes this annual fundraising event to raise awareness of multiculturalism in the community and includes food, entertainment and information booths.

Overall, respondents presented high levels of participation within as well as outside of school; almost three-quarters indicated they were active in sport and recreation programs.



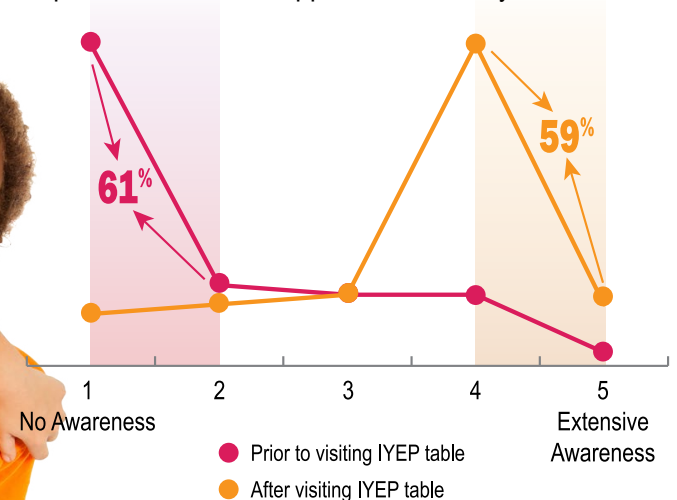
These responses indicate that youth participation was predominantly in sports rather than other recreation programming. However, when respondents rated their interests based on a list of 7 activities, two of the top three interests (ranked 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> most often) were not sport related:

1. Arts Youth Group with visual art, drama and music activities
2. Joining a sport team or organization
3. Cooking classes

The remaining interests included: volunteering, a drop-in sports program, job skills/entrepreneurship training and a youth mentorship program.

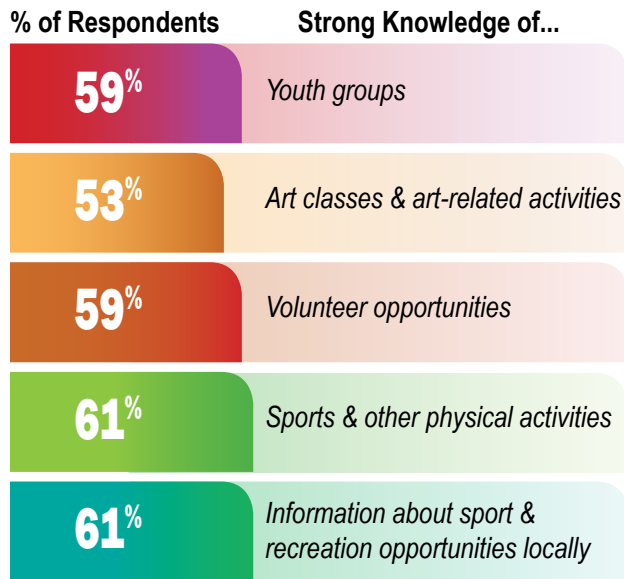
## Knowledge of Local Opportunities

Although youth reported high levels of participation in sport and recreation programming locally, IYEP continued to promote local opportunities at its events. Youth and their families were surveyed about their awareness level: despite high participation in programming, youth nevertheless indicated an increase in their awareness of information about sport and recreation opportunities locally.

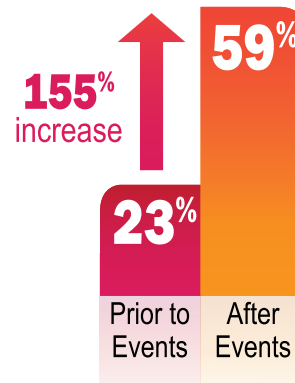




Specifically, after a visit to the IYEP table at local events, the majority of youth surveyed rated themselves as having strong knowledge (4 & 5 on a scale of 5) in the following areas:



Overall, this indicates a significant increase in strong knowledge as a result of a visit to the IYEP table at local events.



### Introduction to New Activities

Along with raising awareness of the types of sport and recreation programming available in Sarnia-Lambton, IYEP assisted local organizations in offering immigrant youth opportunities to try new activities. In June, the Sarnia Muslim Association partnered with the Sarnia Rugby Club to host a Rugby Fun Day. 12 youth participated and learned the different skills required for the sport and had the chance to play a game. After the event, participants were asked if they were more interested in trying out rugby or another sport or activity:

“Yeah! Playing with the ball was fun!”

“(I) want to play soccer, maybe more sports after today.”

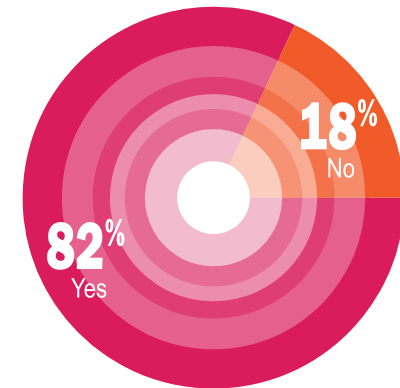
“Today made me want to try another sport.”

“Yes! It was really fun.”



The majority of participants agreed the event made them want to try out a new activity:

**After the Rugby Fun Day, I am more interested in playing a sport or being part of a recreation activity:**



IYEP’s efforts to raise awareness of local sport and recreation opportunities resulted in an increased knowledge of programming and activities for immigrant youth and their families.



# Accessing Recreation Opportunities

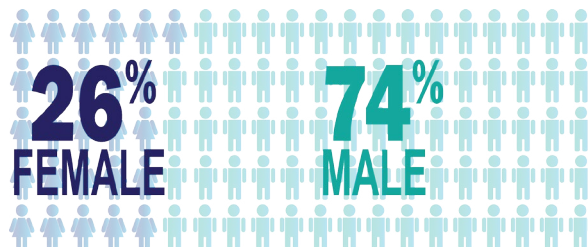
Along with an increased awareness of local opportunities, IYEP sought to increase immigrant children and youth's access to sport and recreation programming. The IYEP Incentives Program, launched in spring of 2015, provided a one-time \$100 subsidy for immigrant children to use towards an activity of their choosing. While eligibility for this program focused on children born outside of Canada (i.e. immigrants), children born in Canada who had at least one sibling born outside of Canada were also eligible to participate. The objectives of the program were to:

- Support immigrant families in more easily accessing recreation activities
- Provide opportunities for immigrant children and youth to learn new skills and increase their interest in recreation activities

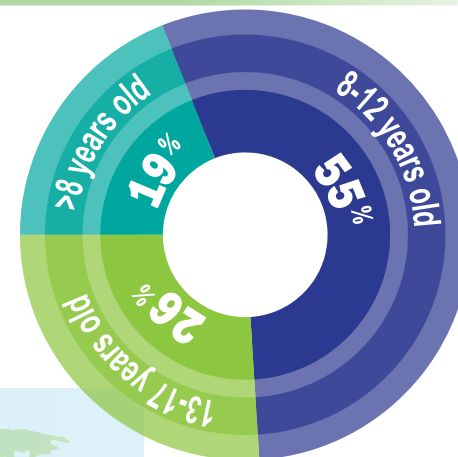
## Profile of Participants

In total, 27 children from 16 families were enrolled in the IYEP Incentives Program in May and June of 2015. The participants represented a diverse group of children and youth with respect to their age, country/region of origin, length of time in Canada and the recreation activities in which they participated.

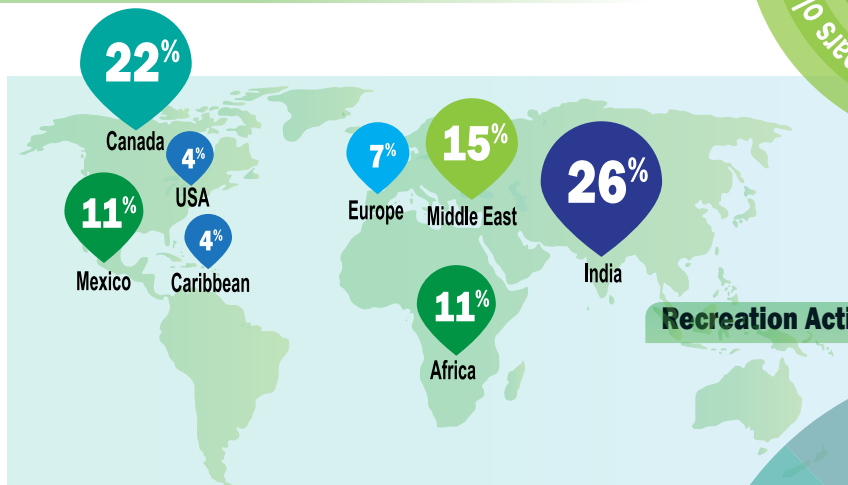
### Gender



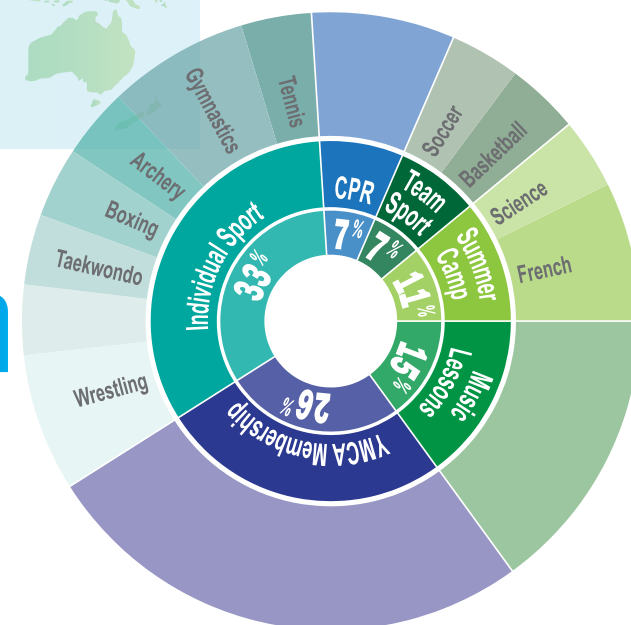
### Age



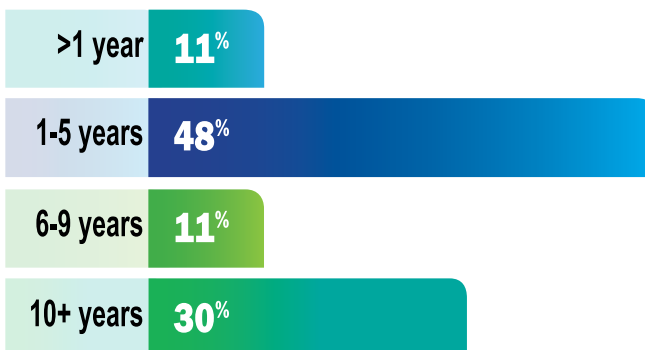
### Region/Country of Origin



### Recreation Activities



### Length of Time in Canada





In July, parents were asked about their and their children's experiences in the Incentives Program; 15 out of the 16 families completed the survey.

## Supporting Families in Accessing Programming

Similar to other IYEP initiatives, the Incentives Program supported families by increasing their overall knowledge of local activities. The Project Leader acted as a point of contact in order to make it easier for families to learn about, connect with, and register for programs. On the whole, parents agreed that the program was beneficial for their families and the community.

**87%**

of parents rated their knowledge of programming as strong after registering their children in the Incentives Program

**100%**

of parents agreed that the program made it easier for their children to participate in sport & recreation activities

**100%**

of parents said they would recommend the Incentives Program to a friend or family member

*"[This] encouraging and supportive program gives kids more opportunities to (be) involved in and get to know recreation and sports."*

*"It's a great program for new families to integrate into Canadian society, meet new friends and stay healthy, active and engaged."*



Not only did this program make it easier for children to participate in sport and recreation activities. The Incentives Program also alleviated some of the financial burden for families. This was a support appreciated greatly by a number of families.

*"Because of this program, we can keep our kids in their [activities]. Without the extra funding we would have had to cancel even though we have a good income. This kind of fund creates opportunities for immigrant families."*

*"Without the sponsorship of IYEP I would not have been able to afford the one week of French camp. My kids are in a French school and would have been the entire summer break without French."*

## Cultivating New Skills and Interests

The majority of parents agreed that the Incentives Program resulted in the development of new skills and positive experiences for their children, thereby increasing the likelihood that their children would carry on in sport and recreation activities.

My child/ren expressed having a positive experience in the activity.

**87%**  
Agreed

I noticed positive reactions in my child/ren when returning home.

**93%**  
Agreed

My child/ren learned something new after participating in the activity.

**93%**  
Agreed

Don't Know

**93%**

of parents who responded agreed that their children were more likely to continue on in sport and recreation programs after participating in the Incentives Program.

These results show that the IYEP Incentives Program successfully supported immigrant children and their families in participating in recreation programs locally.



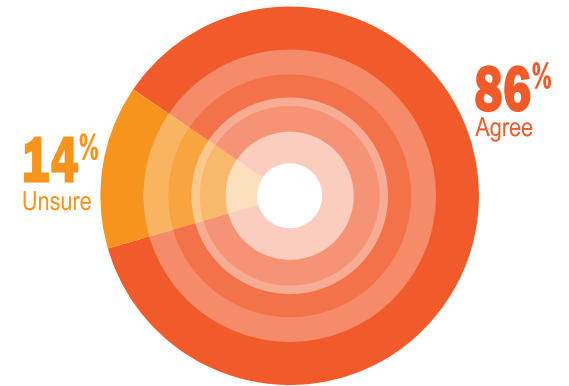
# Conclusion



The Sarnia-Lambton Immigrant Youth Engagement Project has supported immigrant children and youth in becoming more involved in the community by participating in sport and recreation activities. The outcomes in this report indicate that IYEP has increased organizations' capacity to understand and incorporate the needs of immigrant and culturally-diverse youth in their programs. Furthermore, IYEP has increased immigrant families' awareness of and access to programs making it easier for children and youth to participate and more likely that they will continue to take part in sport and recreation programming locally.

This impacts the community at large; when asked, the majority of survey respondents at all its events/activities agreed that IYEP is helping to create a welcoming community for immigrants and newcomers.

**IYEP is helping to create a welcoming community:**



By engaging immigrant children, youth and families IYEP is contributing to Sarnia-Lambton's vision of being an inclusive community in which all of its residents can participate and thrive.

## IYEP by the Numbers

**100+**

immigrant children, youth and parents participated in IYEP events & activities

**16**

steering committee members from a broad range of organizations

**60**

sport & recreation organizations received information on IYEP events

**12**

new partnerships with recreation organizations through IYEP Incentives Program

**40**

organizations & service providers received diversity training

**30**

likes on IYEP Facebook page



