

Newcomer Sport and Physical Activity Network Greater Victoria 2025-2026

Background

From 2023 to present, a diverse group of stakeholders across Greater Victoria, B.C., collaborated to identify the key barriers that newcomers to Canada face in accessing sport and physical activity, one of which is that they are being at greater risk of physical inactivity when compared to their Canadian-born peers. The consultative process to address these barriers informed the development of a [Strategic Action Plan 2024/2025](#), co-led by Sport for Life and the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, with research support from the University of Victoria as well as contributions from leaders in the sport, physical activity, recreation, education, and health sectors.

Organically, we learned that other cities across Canada were having similar conversations and set out to build a nationwide hub program: **Creating Opportunities through Physical Literacy for All newcomer children and Youth (CO-PLAY)**. These hubs are located in Victoria, Calgary, Hamilton, and Halifax, and a developing hub in Sherbrooke, Quebec. Each hub will facilitate a community of practice to inform the broader pan-Canadian network. Individual CO-PLAY Hubs will leverage regional partnerships to facilitate the co-creation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation of programs and practices that promote Physical Literacy among Newcomer youth. Our partnership grant activity will include work captured within these four themes:

- Development of Best Practices
- Integrative Knowledge Mobilization
- Creation of National Evaluation System
- Growth in Partnerships and Extension of CO-PLAY Hub

One of the core recommendations emerging from this plan is the establishment of a sustained, multi-sectoral collaboration focused on improving access and inclusion for newcomers. This initiative—referred to as the **Newcomer Sport and Physical Activity Network**—aims to foster long-term partnerships and coordinated efforts that support meaningful participation and community inclusion through sport and movement.

Purpose

CoPLAY aims to bring together an array of community partners and outstanding interdisciplinary researchers towards the promotion of sport and physical activity for newcomers. The Network will provide newcomers with the tools and opportunities to engage in sports and physical activities. By connecting Victoria's leaders, it fosters inclusion, community building, and safety, opportunities for employment, and well-being. The collaboration will help break down barriers to participation, creating a supportive environment for newcomers to stay active and connect in their new community.

The challenge we will work together to address

Newcomers to Greater Victoria face many challenges that can pose a threat to their health and well-being, sense of belonging and engagement, and standard of living. Social determinants of health such as income and social status, employment, education and literacy - including physical literacy (competence, confidence and motivation to seek opportunities to be active throughout the lifespan), childhood experiences, social supports and coping skills, healthy behaviours, access to health services, gender, culture, and race, contribute to the barriers that newcomers are confronted with when they immigrate to Greater Victoria. These barriers prevent newcomers from accessing key sport, recreation, and physical activity services that contribute to their experience settling in the Victoria area (positive health and well-being outcomes and building meaningful social connections to the community), which can, in turn, have a positive impact on their standard of living within the region.

Based on the known barriers to sport and physical activity programs and services for newcomers to Victoria that were previously developed in the Strategic Plan, Physical Literacy for Life and its partners involved in this collaboration believe a collective impact approach is best suited to begin implementing actions of the Strategic Plan. In addition, we plan to build community stakeholder capacity to support newcomers to Greater Victoria. Cross-sectoral community capacity and resource sharing are vital to reaching our shared goal of facilitating social connection and fostering a sense of belonging among newcomers via sport and physical activity experiences.

Proposed Activities

The collaborative will develop strategic actions and initiate the following activities:

- Formalize the partners of the Network by establishing an MOU for execution.
 - Develop a stronger relationship with the two Greater Victoria school Districts (School District 61 (Greater Victoria) and School District 63 (Saanich))
- Develop toolkits specific to the Greater Victoria environment to foster:
 - Inclusion in sport and physical activity programs,
 - Community building and safety using sport and physical activity,
 - Employment in the sport and recreation spaces,
 - Well-being through sport and physical activity

The community has indicated a need for more confidence in a water environment. Using a grant from the Victoria Foundation, we would like your input to create **Aqua Welcome**.

- **Aqua Welcome** empowers those who support newcomers to Greater Victoria by providing guidelines to build water confidence, safety skills, and swimming abilities through physical literacy principles. It fosters confidence, safety, and long-term wellness, ensuring that all residents, regardless of background, can safely enjoy the region's pools, lakes, and oceanfront. Aqua Welcome empowers organizations and individuals who support newcomers with the knowledge and tools to build physical literacy in aquatic environments.
- **Question for the Group** - Are there other projects for that we should consider for which we could leverage this network?