

# RACISM IN SPORT: THE CITY OF CALGARY REPORT

APRIL 2025



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- All participants who shared their stories and experiences to contribute to this report.
- The City of Calgary Recreation and Sport Partners
- Sport Calgary
- Center for Newcomers
- Action Dignity
- All Indigenous Partners
- Iftu Hargaaya: Peer support

Habitus Collective and ActionDignity have co-authored this report with input from The City of Calgary Partnerships team.

## NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

*Terminology can be used to empower, reclaim, and redefine identities. In this document, the term "Indigenous communities" is used to describe individuals and collectives who consider themselves as related to and/or having historical continuity with "First Peoples". This includes all those whose civilizations flourished in what is now known as Canada, the United States, the Americas, the Pacific Islands, New Zealand, Australia, Asia, and Africa prior to European colonization. There is an incredibly rich diversity of Indigenous communities here in Calgary and this document has attempted to ensure that they are represented in the text wherever possible.*

*Exceptions to our use of the term Indigenous have been made of necessity when we are citing resources that use different terms. This report has capitalized the terms Indigenous, Black, Racialized, and White to respect and signal an understanding of the history and racial identity of these groups. Capitalizing White reflects our understanding that not naming White as a Racialized category risks perpetuating the assumption of White as raceless, superior, neutral, and standard.*

*The following terms are used across the report- Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized youth (most were athletes but some participated in sports and recreation casually); Parents of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized youth- referring to parents of youth participating in sports and recreation; Coaches and Referees-these cut across sports.*

## TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*The project recognizes and acknowledges that we are gathered on the ancestral and traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy, made up of the Siksika (Seeg-see-kah), Piikani (Bee-gun-nee), Amskaapiikani (Om-Skaa-bee-bee-Gun-nee) and Kainai (G-ai-nah) First Nations; the Îethka Nakoda Wîcastabi (ee-YETH'-kah nah-COH'-dah WHISK'-ah-tah-bay) First Nations, comprised of the Chiniki (Chin-ick-ee), Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations; and the Tsuut'ina First Nation. The city of Calgary is also homeland to the historic Northwest Métis and to the Otipemisiwak (Oti-pe-mes-se-wa) Métis Government, Métis Nation Battle River Territory (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6). We acknowledge all Indigenous people who have made Calgary their home.*

*To create an equitable city, it requires the foundational acknowledgement of the colonial history that began over 500 years ago through the Doctrine of Discovery which gave explorers the right to claim "vacant land" in the name of their Sovereign. This land theft was formalized through the Treaty agreements with control asserted through the Indian Act (1876). Indigenous communities did not only lose their land but faced genocide and irreparable damage to their social and cultural fabric. Colonialism was bound to notions of White Supremacy - the idea that the white race is superior to others which to this day remains entrenched in our systems including political, bureaucratic, legal, and economic. As a result, there is continued injustice and inequity faced by our Indigenous communities (De Leeuw, 2016). This is the starting point for our work on equity which presents unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities. We recognize that the fundamental root causes of inequity impact many groups and by centering those principles we can begin to address these historical injustices.*

*The City of Calgary in 2017 adopted the Indigenous Policy and through the Calgary Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee (CAUAC) has been working towards actioning the calls for action outlined in the White Goose Flying report (2016).*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a qualitative community research project conducted in March 2025 by Habitus Collective and ActionDignity, in collaboration with The City of Calgary and Sport Calgary. The research aimed to understand the experiences and impacts of racism within sports for Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized youth, as well as their parents, coaches, and referees.

Through eight focus groups with 64 participants, the research revealed that racism is a significant and pervasive concern across Calgary's sports community. The research employed a co-development and principles-led approach, emphasizing accessibility, sustainability, inclusion, welcoming, belonging, and Reconcili-Action.

Key findings include:

- **Interpersonal Racism:** Participants faced verbal abuse, bullying, stereotyping, and microaggressions, often fueled by racist mindsets. Explicit racism included antagonism, disrespect, and discrediting, while implicit racism involved biases in decision-making. Intersectional factors like gender, culture, religion, and socio-economic status compounded these experiences.
- **Institutional Racism:** Racism intensified at higher levels of competition, with concerns about biased decision-making, lack of accountability in reporting incidents, and poor transparency. Participants felt there was a lack of clear reporting structures, leading to underreporting and fear of retaliation. Parents often felt forced to take responsibility in the absence of institutional support. Cultural considerations were also identified as barriers to access, such as religious clothing requirements or conflicts with religious observances.
- **Systemic Racism:** Systemic issues included unequal funding for teams, with underfunded teams disproportionately impacting Black and Racialized youth. High costs hindered participation, and there was a lack of access to intangible resources like networking, sponsorship, and mentorship. Underrepresentation of racial minorities in leadership roles, such as coaches and referees, was also a significant concern. Participants noted that when they don't see others who look like them in sports leadership, it sends a message that these environments aren't for them.
- **Impacts of Racism:** Racism led to self-doubt, social exclusion, loss of joy in sports, and mental health challenges. Participants described feeling isolated, unsupported, and having to constantly prove their worth. Fear of retaliation often prevented reporting of incidents. Youth participants reported suppressing their identity or altering behaviors to fit in. The constant stress of managing discriminatory behavior took an emotional toll, reducing self-confidence and causing anxiety or depression.

This report underscores the need for sport leaders such as The City of Calgary and Sport Calgary to create support mechanisms that will support local sport organizations across Calgary to combat racism. While previously sport organizations have worked to address racism, there continues to be a strong need for action.

Recommendations for combating racism in sport include developing clear reporting structures, ensuring accountability, providing equitable access to resources, promoting diversity in leadership, and fostering psychologically safe environments. This research serves as a critical foundation for informing policies, programs, and practices to create more inclusive and equitable sports and recreation opportunities for all Calgarians.

# INTRODUCTION

The City of Calgary, Recreation and Sport Partners in collaboration with Sport Calgary has undertaken a qualitative community research project to understand the experiences and impact of racism in sport. This report provides a general overview of racism in sports across various disciplines, rather than focusing on any single sport. The aim is to understand the broader issues affecting the sporting community as a whole. The participants included in this study represent a wide range of sports with varying levels of competitiveness, but do not include professional athletes, ensuring a broad perspective on the everyday experiences of racism in amateur sports. The City of Calgary commissioned Habitus and ActionDignity to conduct this work in October 2024. This qualitative research is complementary to the quantitative survey conducted by The City on racism experienced in sports.

This qualitative project is mainly focused on the experiences of racism among Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized youth. To supplement the experiences of youth, the project also included the voices of parents, coaches and referees and their experiences of direct and indirect racism in the context of sports in Calgary. This work takes a systems approach to understand the role The City and its partners can play in finding solutions.

Sports and recreation are an important way to drive social inclusion and belonging. They offer opportunities for diverse community members to engage with each other and feel a sense of belonging (Arora and Wolbring, 2022). Yet, based on both formal feedback and anecdotal evidence for many Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized communities, sports spaces can be sites that perpetuate racism and discrimination (Weaving a Shared Path Forward, 2023; conversations with City of Calgary Partnerships team, 2024). Recognizing the community's need, The City of Calgary was keen to deepen their knowledge and systematically collect evidence around the experiences of racism in sport. Sport Calgary as a key partner of The City was also interested in identifying the gaps and identifying solutions for strengthening sport spaces, policies, programs and practices.

The goals of this project include:

- Understanding the experiences of (direct or indirect) racism from Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized individuals who are currently/previously participating in any type of sport in the city.
- Understanding the (direct or indirect) impacts and experiences of racism on referees, coaches and parents.
- Identifying potential actions that The City, Sport Calgary or any other sports and recreation organizations can play in addressing racism.

The project reached out to 64 participants including youth, referees, coaches and parents through 8 focus groups. The current report includes the background and context of the project, methodology, key thematic findings and analysis.



## BACKGROUND

Racism in sport and recreation is a crucial and nationally recognized concern across Canada. Nearly one in five people report experiencing or witnessing unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in sports in the previous five years (Statistics Canada, 2023). Racism is the belief that humans can be divided and treated solely based on physical characteristics and that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits, capacities and superiority (Frideres, 2006). Racism is rooted in the historical oppression of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized communities in Canada. Indigenous Peoples suffered the dislocation from their ancestral lands, genocide, and the trauma of residential schools, which aimed to destroy their culture, language, and traditions (Government of Canada, 2020). Black communities experienced the brutal reality of enslavement in Canada in the 17th and 18th centuries until its abolishment in 1833 (Government of Canada, 2022). Furthermore, diverse Racialized communities have been subjected to extensive discrimination, internment, unfair taxation, violence, and persistent stigma, causing lasting harm to their social, economic, and physical well-being (Chan, 2016; Facing History and Ourselves, 2019; McIntosh, 2018; St. Francis Xavier University, n.d.)

Racism, both intentionally and unintentionally embedded within our personal, institutional, and societal structures, links past and present oppression. Understanding this historical context is essential to illuminating and addressing its ongoing presence. Racial identity intersects with poverty, mental health, disability, and other factors, resulting in layered vulnerabilities that contribute to systemic oppression (Inclusion Canada, 2019; Northreach Society, n.d.; Rae, 2020). Communities often face overlapping discrimination based on race (including anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, and anti-Asian), religion (such as Islamophobia and antisemitism), xenophobia, immigration status, ethnicity (like anti-Hispanic bias), gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability.

Racism impacts individuals and communities at various levels. At the interpersonal level individuals face name calling, stereotyping, microaggressions, and biases (Williams & Etkins, 2021). Institutional and systemic racism manifests in practices, policies, and laws that create advantages for some racial groups and simultaneously oppress or neglect others (Williams et al., 2019). As a result, no individual intent is necessary for those institutions and systems to discriminate or impact through racism (Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre (ACLRC), n.d.).

## CITY OF CALGARY ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVES

The City of Calgary's Dismantling Systemic Racism, Transforming Lives: The City of Calgary's Anti-Racism Strategic Action Plan and Framework, 2023- 2027<sup>1</sup> (City of Calgary, 2023) has a mission to dismantle systemic racism through education, engagement, collaboration and policy changes (ibid).

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<sup>1</sup> The City of Calgary Anti-Racism Strategic Plan provides an overview of strategic actions to pave the way for systemic changes that create equitable and fair protection, treatment, and outcomes for all Calgarians by enhancing public safety, dignity, order, and peace.

The City publicly acknowledged the persistence and impact of systemic racism in Calgary when on June 15th, 2020, The City Council passed a Notice of Motion entitled Calgary's Commitment to Anti-Racism (City of Calgary, 2023). This marked the beginning of The City's commitment to build: "A City where people of all backgrounds belong and live our commitment to truth and reconciliation. A city reflective of public dignity in all public spaces. A city that denounces hate; promotes transformative community engagement and actively works to address systemic racism in all forms" (City of Calgary, 2023).

Additionally, The City recognizes the frameworks set forth by the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Alberta Human Rights Act. The City of Calgary is also a member of the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities (formerly known as Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination). Within The City of Calgary there are several initiatives, policies and programs that address equity and discrimination within sports and recreation. These include: [Access and inclusion information - Recreation](#); [Inclusive Play Spaces Implementation Plan](#) (Jan. 2018); [Access Design Standards](#) (2016); [Safe and Inclusive Access Bylaw](#) (2023); [Research and Policy - Recreation page](#); The [CoC Recreation Facility Development & Enhancement Strategy](#) (2016); The [CoC Recreation Master Plan](#) (2010); The [CoC Recreation Zero Based Review](#); [Calgary Recreation Strategic Foundation](#) (2018); The [Joint Use and Planning Agreement](#) (2022).

This current project is also informed by previous work on building a Sports and Recreation Equity Audit Tool (found here <https://www.calgary.ca/sport/>). This audit tool was developed through conducting a detailed background review of existing literature to identify and report best practices in sports and recreation for equity-deserving groups. The second phase of the project included collecting primary data- collecting input from community and system partners, as well as observations from site visits to sports and recreation facilities across Calgary. The final phase of the project involved validating the tool with facility managers and community partners.

## SPORTS AND RECREATION CONTEXT

Calgary's demographic landscape is rapidly evolving. Currently, visible minorities comprise 39% of Calgary's population, ranking fifth highest in Alberta (Government of Alberta, 2023). Over the past five years, the Indigenous population has grown at a faster rate than the overall city population, and today, a majority of Calgarians are first or second-generation immigrants (City of Calgary, 2021). In 2022, Calgary led Canada in welcoming Canadians and migrants per capita (Calgary Economic Development, 2023). This growth in Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized populations is accompanied by an increasing recognition of their intersectional identities and unique needs.

Across Canada, the systemic nature of racism in sport has been well documented. This includes discrimination experienced by ethnocultural sport teams and groups, inefficient judging systems, and a range of barriers to participation for Indigenous, Racialized and religious minorities in sport, such as targeted policies and lack of

funding (Brown et al., 2021). Recent reports highlight that in 2023, 6% of individuals in the wider sports community reported having experienced unfair treatment, racism or discrimination in community sports across the country during the previous five years (Statistics Canada, 2025). Racialized people were three times more likely (12%) to report these experiences compared to the non-racialized population (4%) (ibid). Further, more than 25% of sports participants in athletic roles reported feeling that racism and discrimination are problems in community sports in Canada, and over one in 10 of people who discontinued sports reported being subjected to unfair treatment or discrimination (12%) and bullying or harassment (11%) (ibid). In Canada, Indigenous athletes have diverse and diverging experiences with racism in sport, with Indigenous-specific racism in sport consistently described as widespread (Forsyth & McKee, 2024). Factors such as age, sporting experience, and gender further shape experiences of racism in sport for Indigenous athletes (ibid). Experiences of racism in sport in Alberta and Calgary are most described through media sources, who report consistent experiences of racism among athletes and sport officials across different leagues (Desai, 2024; Hockey Alberta, 2020).

The social significance of sports and recreation varies considerably across diverse populations, deeply intertwined with individual and cultural understandings of recreation. Sports and recreation have the potential to enhance the well-being of individuals and families in numerous ways beyond physical health. However, achieving true inclusion necessitates that sports and recreation spaces and services adopt an equity lens, ensuring opportunities are created and positive outcomes are fostered for all.

# METHODOLOGY

## KEY FOUNDATIONS

The consultant's approach was grounded in these key foundations:

1. **Co-development approach:** The consultants took a co-creation approach -a collaborative approach of creative problem solving between diverse actors at all stages of the research. The team collaborated through multiple co-working sessions. This helped to not only strengthen the engagement as diverse perspectives but also helped to identify gaps in the process. The team was composed of The City of Calgary, Sport Calgary and the consultants- Habitus Collective and ActionDignity and co-host organizations/individuals. Based on their preliminary research, The City had pre-identified key areas of focus, as well as key co-hosts who would be an integral part of the dialogue.

1. The City of Calgary and Sport Calgary were responsible for the overarching research questions, identifying key audiences and co-hosts as well as providing ongoing oversight to the research process.
2. Co-host organizations/individuals included Actiondignity, Sport Calgary, Center for Newcomers and Indigenous partners. They helped to recruit participants and organize the engagements (including disbursing honorariums).
3. ActionDignity was primarily responsible for collaborating with the co-host organizations to organize the sessions, co-lead the event planning, design and engagement facilitation.
4. Habitus Collective was responsible for co-leading the design, engagement facilitation and reporting.

2. **Principles-led approach:** This project was grounded in key principles that were jointly identified by the consultants and The City team through a previous phase of work (Sports and Recreation Equity Audit Tool). Adopting a principles-based approach ensured that the project and insights gathered in this work remain grounded in evidence-informed and well-researched practices. Each of these principles are integrally tied to each other and can best be understood as nested within each other.

- **Accessibility:** Accessibility, as defined in The City's Social Wellbeing Policy, means removing barriers to access, to meeting the needs of diverse communities including- those living with disabilities including non-obvious/invisible disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, as well as including the accessibility of diverse populations from different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, 2SLGBTQ+, sexuality, religion, ages, and body types to ensure that they are able to fully engage and participate in sports and recreation.

- Sustainability: Create spaces, programs, services and systems that seek to positively impact social, economic and environmental spheres for future generations not just for individuals but communities, and the environment.
- Inclusive, Welcoming & Belonging: Ensuring all individuals irrespective of background, race, religion, ability, socio-economic status, gender or sexual identity among other identities feel that they can participate and engage in sports and recreation. There are cultural safety considerations made in the space. Belonging is a sense of security and support, when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group/community.
- Reconcili-Action: Taking active steps to respond to recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and ensure Indigenous principles and ways of knowing.

## PHASES, SAMPLE & TOOLS

### Phase 1: Co-creation Phase with The City and Sport Calgary

For this project, The City wanted to gain a general understanding of racism at varying levels of sports, not restricted to a particular sport, group or region. In this phase of the project, The City's team, Sport Calgary and the consultant (referred to as the project team) held multiple meetings to collaboratively shape the project's direction. This served as a foundation block for the engagement plan.

#### Key Outputs from the Session 1: Setting Foundations

- Building a common understanding: The project team built common goals for the engagement and reflected on the key principles of engagement.
- Reviewing key data needs: This included reviewing the quantitative survey questions and identifying the key gaps in knowledge from the perspective of The City and Sport Calgary.

Output: Engagement Questions and Design

#### Key Outputs from Session 2 & 3: Engagement Design and Collaboration

- Developing the engagement plan: Based on the foundational work the consultants developed the engagement plan for different groups- youth, parents, coaches and referees. The plan was shared with The City and also reviewed by a trauma informed counselor from The City.
- Working with co-hosts: The consulting team worked with co-hosts (pre-identified by The City) to develop a recruitment plan and support the engagement. The co-hosts reviewed the engagement plan and provided input to refine and strengthen the plan.

## Phase 2: Engagement Implementation/ Delivery

For this project, the primary area of focus was 'experiences of racism and discrimination for youth in sports', therefore youth voices made up the main component of this study. However, other supplementary voices from parents, coaches and referees were also included, as these key actors form the ecosystem of youth's sport experiences. The consultants along with the co-hosts conducted 8<sup>2</sup> focus groups with youth and these related ecosystem actors i.e. parents, coaches and referees. The table below provides details around these focus groups.

### Sampling strategy:

- A total of 64 participants across 8 focus groups participated in this project. This included 44 youth (1 youth was also a referee) and 20 adults- 3 referees (excluding 1 youth referee), 8 coaches and 9 parents.
- Targeted samples were included in this project with the goal of reaching a wide range of perspectives from across Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized communities. Each co-host approached relevant participants through posters, word-of mouth or social media.
- Youth participants were selected from those who were actively involved in sports and recreation.
- After the completion of 6 focus groups the consultants identified that there were gaps in the sample and added 2 additional focus groups. Both these groups did not have any specific co-host. Recruitment posters were shared with several community connections.

### Event details:

- Each engagement was organized for 1.5-2 hours and included games, discussion and mental health support provided by a peer mental health consultant.
- ActionDignity and Habitus staff conducted all facilitation. Co-host staff were present but did not facilitate the sessions.
- The session plan drew on the principles of the project where all participants had enough opportunities to share and learn. The youth sessions differed from the adult sessions and were designed with more activities and games.<sup>3</sup>
- The session plan accounted for diversity in age, ability, neurodiversity, gender, sexuality, religion etc.
- A trauma-informed and anti-racist lens was applied to the activities.

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<sup>2</sup> Originally 6 focus groups were planned however due to low participation numbers across some racial categories 2 additional focus groups were added.

<sup>3</sup> Detailed facilitation plans for youth and adult sessions were shared with The City project team.

- 2 parents and 3 referees preferred participating in interviews and the focus group guide was adapted to an interview setting.

Name of Focus Group & Co-host	Sample
YOUTH GROUPS	
1. ActionDignity- Racialized Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total : 22</li> <li>- Context: Newcomers/Racialized/ethno-cultural diverse.</li> <li>- Age: 18-24 year olds</li> </ul>
2. Center for Newcomers - Newcomer Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total : 7</li> <li>- Context: Newcomers/Racialized/ethno-cultural diverse.</li> <li>- Age: 12-18 year olds</li> </ul>
3. Generalized Youth Group - Virtual; no co-host; open recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total : 4</li> <li>- Context: Newcomers/Racialized/ethno-cultural diverse.</li> <li>- Age: 12-24 year olds</li> </ul>
4. Indigenous Youth Group - in person; no co-host; open recruitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total: 7</li> <li>- Context: Indigenous youth</li> <li>- Age: 15-24 year olds</li> </ul>
5. Indigenous Youth Group - Virtual; no co-host; open recruitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total: 4</li> <li>- Context: Indigenous youth</li> <li>- Age: 15-24 year olds</li> </ul>
ADULT GROUPS	
6. Sport Calgary-Coaches/Volunteer coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total: 8</li> <li>- Context: Coaches across sports</li> </ul>
7. Sport Calgary- Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total: 9 (6 - focus group; 1 interview; 2 written responses)</li> <li>- Context: Parents of youth participating in sports and recreation</li> </ul>
8. Sport Calgary- Referees (interviews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants total: 3</li> <li>- Context: Referees across sports</li> <li>- Adult referees</li> </ul>

## LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

This project has some limitations:

- The sample size is small but given the qualitative nature of the design it provides a compelling foundation for action and reflection.
- Some more engagement is needed to understand specific intersections of disability, gender, sexuality or immigration status.
- Ongoing work with Indigenous communities is needed to understand specific differences among various Indigenous nations and Peoples.

## FINDINGS - WHAT WE HEARD

This section of the report summarizes themes from the engagement phase of the project. It includes data collected through focus groups and interviews with youth-athletes and players, parents, coaches, and referees, as well as the results of working sessions with The City of Calgary Recreation and Sport team and Sport Calgary.

The project explored how participants defined and understood racism and discrimination, their experiences across interpersonal, institutional, and systemic contexts, and the resulting impacts on their lives. Each theme shares key findings from the project and includes illustrative quotes from the participants. Where required, specific differences among the youth participants and adults (parents, referees and coaches) have been separated. The findings are divided into these main themes and sub themes.

Theme 1: Interpersonal Racism and Discrimination	1.1 Defining Interpersonal Racism 1.1.1 Explicit and implicit racism and discrimination 1.2. Experiences 1.2.1 Racist and discriminatory experiences 1.2.2 Intersectional racism 1.2.3 Inter-generational trauma
Theme 2: Institutional Racism and Discrimination	2.1 Definitions 2.2 Experiences 2.2.1 Increased racism in competitive sports 2.2.2 Lack of institutional accountability 2.2.3 Cultural considerations
Theme 3: Systemic Racism and Discrimination	3.1 Definitions 3.2 Experiences



	3.2.1 Poor financial supports 3.2.2 Lack of accountability 3.2.3 Under-representation
Theme 4: Impacts of Racism and Discrimination	4.1 Psychological insecurities 4.2 Social isolation 4.3 Loss of joy in playing 4.4 Impact of fear of racism

## THEME1 INTERPERSONAL RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

### 1.1 Defining Interpersonal racism

Participants categorized interpersonal racism as being distinct from institutional or systemic racism. Interpersonal racism was viewed as behaviours that occur between individuals and was often expressed through both **explicit and implicit forms of racism** as distinct forms of racial prejudice that they experience. This included a range of behaviors that contributed to the exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized youth and communities. Several parents spoke about racism and discrimination as **ingrained or intrinsic 'racist mindsets'** that many people grow up with and noted that these mindsets can't be shifted easily. Participants connected the experiences of 'on the field' racism to what happens off the field. They viewed the problem of racism and discrimination as **endemic and widespread**, and stressed that what is seen in sports is reflective of what is happening in the broader societal context.

Figure 1 is a word cloud representing participants' definitions of racism and discrimination. The size of each word indicates its frequency in their responses. It visually summarizes key terms and concepts that are central to their understanding of these complex issues in sports.

### Figure 1. Racism Definition Mapping - Word Cloud



### 1.1.1 Explicit and Implicit racism

- Explicit racism: Participants' definition of 'explicit racism' included overt, intentional acts of discrimination or prejudice that show up as clear, conscious, and deliberate racist attitudes or actions. Participants shared that incidents of explicit racism are often discernable and can be easily identified by both the individual experiencing it and bystanders. Youth participants emphasized that in such cases, the racism was direct and intentional, often making it easier to report or address. Selected quotes highlight some key ways in which participants defined explicit racism:

- **Antagonism:** *"Putting someone down because of the colour of their skin or their looks, or antagonism towards someone who is different" (Black youth - Focus group).*
- **Disrespect:** *"Disrespecting someone's gender, culture, religion or ancestry." (Racialized/Black youth - Focus group); "Making fun of or belittling someone because of their race." (Indigenous youth - Focus group); "I don't have to constantly prove that we are worthy of your respect. You need to be better educated. It's not a 'me' problem" (Racialized/Black Parent - Focus group).*
- **Discrediting:** *"Discrediting the value of a person's input, suggestion or thought based on their gender or identity etc" (Referee - Interview).*

- Implicit racism: Several Indigenous, Black and Racialized youth and adult participants referred to implicit racism as **unconscious or unintentional biases** that influence behaviors, attitudes or decisions taken by individuals in positions of power such as referees, coaches, management. Multiple participants shared that these biases are often subtle, where the individuals who hold them may not even recognize them, but they still result in discriminatory outcomes.

- Power Imbalance: *"It is a system of power to benefit one group; a system created by White people for White people. It is inequality in power." (Racialized/Black Parent - Focus group)*
- Subtle discrimination: *"Hateful, disrespectful things you can't put a real finger on, but they hurt you". (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*

## 1.2 Experiencing interpersonal racism

### 1.2.1 Racist and discriminatory experiences

Youth participants and parents spoke at great length of the varying types of racism and discrimination that they faced on a regular basis. This often occurred either between players/athletes or from the spectators. Participants reported facing racism and discrimination not only during play or practice but also in locker rooms and other settings where players interacted. Racist and discriminatory participant experiences are listed below.

- Verbal abuse: Many youth participants in the project faced **verbal abuse**. This included **bullying, stereotyping, name-calling, and racial slurs**. Often this type of behavior occurred in the presence of adults- coaches, referees and parents.
- Unfair treatment or biased behavior: Several participants also spoke about the **unfair treatment** of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized players/athletes. Examples of such behavior included **excessively penalizing** Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized players, athletes or teams; coaches/referees **overlooking aggressive actions** against non-White athletes or teams; **overlooking or dismissing complaints** raised by Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized players, athletes or teams; and **biased player selection**. Some participants also spoke about **negative stereotypes** held by fans about Indigenous, Black and diverse racialized athletes/players. Indigenous, Black and diverse racialized participants spoke about being held up to different standards or being stereotyped around what types of games/sports they would play.
- Disrespect: Many participants spoke to experiences of being disrespected because of their race or ethnicity. Participants described disrespect as attacking their **dignity and honour and discrediting** their abilities. When asked to describe what respect and dignity would look like in the sports, participants highlighted that dignity in sports means that all youth are respected for their personality and humanity, beyond just their athletic

performance. Several participants spoke about wanting respect both on and off the playing field.

- Lack of belonging, inclusion and dignity: Participants shared that it was critical not only to feel welcomed and valued but also a part of the team and treated with respect. However, very often participants did not feel they were included or respected as a person but only valued for their talent or skill.

- Discriminatory behaviour: *"My team, they all have braids, they are always so proud to wear their team's jerseys. But it identifies them as First Nations. So evaluation time comes and we always tell them, flip them inside out. They can't tell where you're from. Players below them would be getting moved up. So finally had to tell the boys to tuck in your braids, and sure enough, the next time they played, they got moved up just because they couldn't tell they're Natives"* (Indigenous Coach - Focus group).
- Bullying: *"My sister is in a White-dominated sport, and she wears the hijab. She gets bullied and excluded, like the girls would tell her, we don't want to do anything with you because you are so covered up, you're weird"* (Racialized Youth - Online focus group).
- Verbal abuse and racial slurs:
  - *"(During play) they call me 'monkey' and the n word. and they don't think too much about it."* (Black Youth - Focus group)
  - *I've been called a 'dirty Indian' and a 'wagon burner' by kids while playing. Yeah they don't care."* (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)
  - *"My friend's last name is Running Rabbit, and they're like, what kind of last name is that, telling her to get back in her cage."* (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)
- Stereotyping:
  - *"You hear this everywhere. 'Black athletes can only play basketball', 'Asians are only good at badminton', 'oh they're Chinese, they cheat', 'you're too small to play rugby'."* (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)
  - *"In my sport, like, in the Olympics you only see White athletes. It's like you have to be a certain skin colour and weight and height. and if you're not, it's this unspoken standard they hold everyone against, so you don't have a chance. In my Olympics tryouts, they turned their faces away when it was my turn. I told my coach, but she is pretty racist herself so yeah, nothing happened."* (Racialized Youth - Focus group)
- Bias in decision making: *"I was told by my coach that if I make a mistake, my mistake will be noticed more by judges. He clearly implied that it was*

*because I will stand out from everyone else, being the only [Racialized] person on the team." (Racialized Youth - Focus group)*

- Stereotyping:
  - *"When I went to a city school, (at games) they treated Native kids like they were dumber, or like they had to help them more." (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"It's not only individual. Racism is systemic. When you go to buy equipment for being a referee and the person selling it says to you, 'you know you have to be good at skating to buy that', he's coming from a position of ingrained racism that a Brown person can't be a referee. It's more than individual perspectives." (Racialized Youth Referee - Online focus group)*
- Microaggressions:
  - *"When I would join a team or club for the first time, they would speak to me in a loud voice and speak very slowly, like I don't understand English. That is very insulting." (Racialized Youth - Online Focus group).*
  - *"I'm the only Black, hijab wearing person in a very White sport so I like, really stand out. There's this older White person at the facility who makes it a point to ask me questions like, what are you doing here? Who are you here with? And when he started seeing me there regularly and knew that I play, he came by to say stuff like, do you even know enough math to calculate the weight and angle and trajectory? I doubt he goes around asking every player that." (Black Youth - Focus group)*
- Disrespect: *"Somehow I feel like there's no compassion or respect for anyone who is not White. The way honestly people talk is insulting. Like once there were 4 or 5 Asian girls in our team, and one girl got hurt, her finger was bleeding. So we stopped the game and she was getting it bandaged, and there was this White parents started saying, 'Oh this is wasting our time, you have so many of those [players] anyways, send another one, they're all the same.' This was extremely disrespectful to the girl and also for us Chinese people" (Racialized parent - Focus group)*

### 1.2.2. Intersectional understanding of racism

Participants reflected on several intersecting identity factors that shaped their experiences of racism and discrimination. Youth participants from Indigenous, Black and Racialized groups shared that racism becomes more pronounced and severe when it [intersects with other forms of discrimination](#), like culture, language, socio-economic status, gender or religion among other factors.

For instance, female youth participants described experiencing discrimination

based on both their race and gender, which was more intense as compared to male participants. Based on their own experiences, several parents shared their perspectives of intersectional discrimination where experiences of racism were compounded by their perceived citizenship status. A third-generation Canadian participant shared that they are frequently perceived as an immigrant and told to *"go back where you came from"* due to their ethnicity. These participants described such experiences as "unnecessary aggressions" and felt that the general public needs to be educated about being more inclusive.

The following quotes illustrate some experiences of intersectionality in racism/discrimination.

- Gender: *"To me, racism is differential treatment, often negative, towards an individual or group of people based on their race, ethnicity, sometimes religion, culture, all at the same time. As a Black woman what I face is so multilayered. It's my hair, my body, everything. It goes beyond just race."* (Black Youth - Focus group)
- Culture: *"We have a different slang than [non-Indigenous teammates] and like, different way we speak. So if we speak that way in front of them, they make it sound like it's not normal, make fun of us. It's not only racism, like based on what we look like. [It's] language too."* (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)
- Religion: *"When I'm in the stands with a group of 4,5 other South Asian moms and someone comes and yells at me, only me, that I don't belong here, I think it's fair to say it's not because of my race, but because I'm a hijab-wearing Muslim person."* (Racialized Parent - Interview)
- Socioeconomic Class: *"It's not always racial slurs. My team is from Forest Lawn, and when I take them to a tournament in another part of the city, you can see a pattern, right? Lots of other teams, but they would come to my team and be like, your kids stole my stuff. I told my team to step aside, I don't want them exposed to this. Talked to the adults and it turned out they found their stuff. It was just missing. But you see? They would just assume because my team is from a certain background, they are the ones who must have stolen stuff".* (White Coach - Focus group)

### 1.2.3. Intergenerational trauma of racism:

Racism profoundly impacted participants differently. For newcomers, it was an immediate shock upon arrival in Canada, causing confusion. For Black and Racialized participants born in Canada, racism was a gradual experience beginning in early childhood, frequently as they began school. Several youth participants reported that parents and grandparents considered racism a way of life to be dealt with. Indigenous youth participants referred to 'inter-generational trauma' and shared their experiences of racism and discrimination by their community. Parents that participated in the project linked their own experiences of discrimination and racism to what their children are facing. They noted that



despite many efforts to reduce racism from when they were young to now, they still see their children struggling with racism.

The following quotes highlight these experiences:

- Sudden exposure as newcomers: *"Racism started when I landed in Canada, I was 12, and I felt it right at the airport, the way people were treating me and my family. It felt different."* (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)
- Early childhood exposure: *"I was in kindergarten, I remember maybe my first or second day of school and I was the only Black girl in my class. The girl sitting next to me looked at my hand, and started rubbing at my skin, saying take this off. I couldn't understand what was happening then. But I now know that was a very racist action."* (Black Youth - Focus group)
- Exposure through generational learnings: *"I always knew what racism is, what it can look like because my parents always talk about it at home. So I guess I know what to expect. It's not pleasant but at least I know what to expect. It has always just been a part of my life."* (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)
- Ongoing trauma: *"I came here as an adult immigrant after marriage. My husband who is born and raised here told me from the start that I should expect racism. That was my exposure to racism 21 years ago. He was born here 50 years ago. And last week, my son - a 3rd generation Canadian - was told at a train station to go back where he came from. What is this? Nothing changed in 50 years?"* (Racialized Parent - Interview)
- Generational roots: *"A child repeats what they hear. Sport is often not the first place they have heard those slurs, those comments. It's generational - heard through parents, and then the kids feel like they can get away with it because their parents did too".* (White Coach - Focus group)

## THEME 2 INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

### 2.1 Definition of institutional racism

Participants described *institutional racism* in sport when sports organizations, groups or recreation facilities have discriminatory policies and practices that unfairly disadvantage athletes from Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized groups. These practices can either be formal (e.g. funding structures), or informal (e.g. increased and unchecked discrimination and bias in selection). Youth and coach participants shared that institutional racism can be seen in *hiring, coaching and decision-making*.

## 2.2 Experiencing institutional racism

### 2.2.1 Increased racism in competitive sports

Indigenous, Black and Racialized youth and parents reported experiencing higher and more intense levels of racism and discrimination as a sport becomes more **competitive**. Youth reported an increase in racial microaggressions, subtle insults, dismissals, and stereotyping at higher levels of competition, where the intensity of the sport led to greater scrutiny, pressure, and visibility. Consequently, athletes either dropped out of the sport or did not participate at a competitive level.

Parents also reported seeing **increased discrimination** at a more competitive level of sports. Many parents shared that they accompany their children to locker rooms out of fear of **intense racism and bullying**, especially when their children are the only non-White athlete on a team. Others described feeling **stressed and anxious** at games because they anticipate their children to be subjected to severe instances of racism (racial slurs, name calling, bullying, even physical violence), in case their team won.

Some examples of institutional racism from adults' perspectives are included in the quotes below:

- Racism in competitive sport:
  - *"I've played this sport since I was 4 and I've always loved it. But it's only when I've become more competitive that I've noticed this very obvious discrimination. Kind of like they don't want you here". (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"I have been coaching for 20 years. It's a sad reality. When kids play recreationally, you know, just throw a ball at a neighbourhood park, that sort of thing, you don't see racism. But same kids in more formal settings, more competitive, would face racism and discrimination." (White Coach - Focus group)*
  - *"I have 3 kids, all have played the same sport since they started Grade 4 and it was a big deal for the family each time. But now with my youngest, I have realized that the joy of the sport goes away after 4-5 years. The more competitive the sport becomes, the more you are faced with discrimination. The stress of going to games, knowing what your child will face on the field is not worth it." (Racialized/Black Parent - Interview)*
- Exclusionary environment in competitive sports:
  - *"There have been times when our team was competing against an all-White team. And they are all Racialized. And I have wished for our team to lose because winning means spectators will boo them, losing team will push and shove, be angry, call names." (Racialized/Black Parent - Focus group)*



### 2.2.2 Lack of institutional accountability

- Poor accountability: All participants emphasized the need to have [transparent accountability structures](#) in sports and recreation. Participants defined accountability as requiring consequences for those who engage in racism or discrimination. Participants noted that there is an institutional and systemic [lack of clear accountability measures](#) when it comes to reporting incidents of racism and discriminations. Participants emphasized that while systems exist for reporting aggressive behavior, abuse of officials, and general misconduct, specific mechanisms for addressing racism and discrimination are lacking.
- Youth/Parents forced to take responsibility: A majority of adult participants felt that in the absence of clear reporting processes and structures, it became the responsibility of the athlete or parent/guardian to seek a solution to the issue. Participants felt this was [unfair, placing an immense burden](#) on individuals or parents, particularly when children were young and less able to advocate for themselves. For instance, a parent described a match final where their daughter's all-Racialized team faced multiple acts of physical violence from an opposing all-White team. Three girls sustained injuries, including a fractured bone and two concussions. Despite lodging complaints with the Calgary association and escalating the issue to the provincial authority, which then referred them back to the Calgary association, no action was taken. A further indication of distrust in the system was the numerous accounts from youth who felt compelled to respond to racist remarks or actions with [physical aggression](#) during games.
- Not directly addressing the incidents: Rather than addressing racist incidents directly, several youth participants narrated instances where when their coaches would encourage them to *'fight it out on the field'*, or *'take your revenge by winning'*, or *'take your anger out in the game'* (*Indigenous and Racialized focus group participants*). Participants felt that this was an inappropriate way to resolve a problem, with one Racialized respondent saying, *"winning a game is not the right way to respond to racism. Racism needs to be resolved as racism."* (*Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group*)

### 2.2.3 Under reporting of racist incidents

- Poor transparency leads to erosion in trust: Parents reported that when incidents of racism go unaddressed or are handled in a non-transparent manner, it undermines trust in the institutions and the system. This creates an environment where young athletes/players feel unsafe, unsupported, and undervalued. This mistrust directly contributes to underreporting of discriminatory incidents. They emphasized that when athletes do not trust that their complaints will be taken seriously, or when they see no consequences for those responsible for racist behaviours, they are less likely to speak out. This fear of retaliation, dismissal, or a lack of resolution

has allowed many incidents of racism being unreported, allowing the issue to persist unchecked.

- Fear of retaliation prevents reporting: Another issue of note that emerged was that youth athletes and parents don't report racism and discrimination because they fear **retaliation and don't trust** the system. Youth and parents worry about social exclusion, being dropped from teams, and mistreatment. Youth and parents said that if they knew their complaints will result in appropriate action, and not be used against them, they would be more confident in reporting. However, they narrated multiple ways in which they have experienced backlash for reporting incidents, ranging from social exclusion, being dropped from teams, not selected for an event, excluded from tournaments, and mistreated during trainings, among others. One youth participant shared an instance where he didn't report racism because he was trying for a scholarship and he felt that if he reported racism, he wouldn't get the scholarship.
- Poor procedures: They also don't believe complaints will be taken seriously or result in appropriate action. Multiple participants found the reporting process to be complex, having a **lack of procedural clarity**, cumbersome processes, being time consuming and requiring unrealistic processes. Participants specifically spoke about the impracticality of having 'evidence-based' complaints, unsure of what constitutes 'evidence' when racism is often implicit, and goes unchecked.

Selected examples are included in the quotes below:

- Public racism: *"Who is responsible for managing racism from the crowd and parents? There are so many rules for managing and reporting bullying and abuse for referees. What about athletes? What about parents?" (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
- Lack of accountability:
  - *"I feel like I am responsible for avoiding racism all the time. It shouldn't be my responsibility. Like I reported the incident but nothing was done. So I chose to sit out at the next game because the racist person was still on the team." (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"I think there is a definite confusion, whose responsibility is it? Is it the coach's responsibility? Because I tell my athletes when you are on the court, you don't listen to your parents or anyone, you only listen to me. So I do wonder if as the coaches, we do have the responsibility to set the tone." (White Coach - Focus group)*
  - *"There's a field marshal and the job of the field marshal is to make sure that the parents are calm and there were times when I wasn't the field marshal, and I was wondering who the hell is the field marshal? Whose job is it to calm things down? That's the thing. The people whose job it is to be responsible are not doing their job." (Racialized/Black Parent - Interview)*

- Poor follow up:
  - *"We don't know what happens to our complaints. It's like a black hole. So we stop complaining. Like, there's no point." (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"You never actually know what happens, right? You say you were going to handle it. What was the final result? Was this referee punished? Was he let go? Did he get any training? As an official thing, you need to know this is what we put [the complaint] forward for." (Racialized/Black Parent - Focus group)*
- Retaliation and fear of reporting:
  - *"Do you really want to report that the star player of the team is a racist? Who's going to do that? You're gonna be out of the team like that [snaps fingers]. You just don't report". (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"You're labelled a whiner, a snitch. Nobody wants to do anything with you. So you keep your mouth shut." (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"The team doesn't want you to file a complaint because it brings a bad spotlight on them. What do you do?" (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
- Poor procedures and complexity:
  - *"I hear it so many times, 'do you have proof? Do you have evidence?', Like what, you expect me to have a camera on at all times to record the things people say for evidence before you'll consider my complaint?" (Racialized/Black Parent - Focus group)*
  - *"People are generally smart enough to not say stupid stuff when the ref is around. So what evidence do you report?" (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"People in the stands don't say anything when they can be heard by anyone. They'll be labelled 'racist'. It happens when there's no one around to hear them." (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"I don't know how to report, I don't know who to report to." (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*

### 2.2.3 Cultural consideration can be a barrier to continued access to sport

For some athletes from diverse backgrounds, cultural considerations play a significant role in shaping how they experience and access sports. They shared that these factors could hinder participation depending on their cultural context, values, and societal norms. Participants noted that although sports organizations

are becoming more flexible, some athletes still have trouble finding places that respect their religious or cultural requirements. As an example, an Indigenous parent felt that awareness and education of cultural practices can go a long way in making diverse athletes feel more included.

A few examples shared by participants included:

- For Muslim athletes, for example, religious clothing requirements, such as wearing a hijab or other modest clothing, limits participation in sports that have uniform requirements.
- Some female Indigenous youth participants shared their discomfort with wearing revealing clothing or requiring increased privacy in locker/changing rooms.
- A few athletes also spoke to religious observances that conflict with practice schedules, games, or tournaments, especially if they fall on major religious holidays or during fasting periods. This creates a dilemma for athletes who wish to participate but are unable to do so due to their religious commitments, impacting their ability to fully participate in sports.

A few quotes that illustrate these ideas are below:

- Lack of cultural sensitivity: *"In all my years of raising athlete kids, only one coach has ever asked me, 'what can we do? Can we gather your team for a smudging ceremony'. In all my years, only one coach. I, the kids, really appreciated that and it made me think, no one has ever asked me that before."* (Indigenous Parent - Focus group)

## THEME 3: SYSTEMIC RACISM

### 3.1 Defining systemic racism

Participants spoke about systemic racism and its impacts on the sporting culture in Calgary. *Systemic racism* was described by several participants as being deeply embedded within **systems that create a cycle of continuity** where racist behaviors are normalized and perpetuated. Participants described systemic racism as **structural and generational** where policies and social systems are creating **disadvantages** for certain racial or ethnic groups.

Selected quotes about systemic racism are included below:

- Cycle of Continuity:
  - *"Nobody told my coaches it was wrong. My White teammates would see my White coaches be racist to me, and they would come to me and they knew it was wrong but they would just let it go. So if they grow up to be coaches, they would know that it's ok to be racist because they know they wouldn't be reprimanded for it". (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"The right time to talk about racism is to young kids, for example in minor associations and leagues. If a child grows up seeing and hearing racist remarks as a normal part of life, they will grow up to continue the cycle. Once you're an adult with a certain mindset, it is very difficult to change behaviours. We can try all we can, but an older racist person will not likely change." (Racialized Referee - Interview)*
  - *"Maybe we can learn from good practices from other sporting cultures. Like in Judo or Taekwondo, you first teach discipline and respect for other players before you teach game techniques. It becomes a part of the players mentality from the start." Racialized Referee - Interview)*

### 3.2 Experiencing systemic racism

Systemic racism affects Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized youth involved in sports and recreation, manifesting as poor financial support and investment, unequal access to tangible and intangible resources, and a lack of representation in leadership positions such as coaches, managers, and referees.

#### 3.2.1 Poor financial supports and investment sport and recreation

Indigenous, Black and Racialized youth talked about how systemic structures of discrimination in competitive sports creates barriers to succeed.

- Underfunded teams: Many Black and Racialized youth participants shared experiences of being disproportionately placed in/ part of **underfunded teams** making it harder for them to advance to higher levels. They shared

that disparity in resources, not just discourages them from participating but at times leads them to [drop out of events and tournaments](#).

- High costs of sports and recreation: Participants reported high costs related to equipment, sports facilities, and quality training. Costs related to registration, and competition fees, travel and accommodation for competitive events placed a financial strain on families supporting athletic careers. These barriers impact both entry-level participation and the ability to progress to higher levels of competition.

Multiple youth participants shared that when their families are already struggling financially, they may not be able to cover the costs associated with sports participation, which leads them to drop out. Several parents shared the [financial strain](#) of supporting a child's sports career, especially when it involves traveling, coaching, or specialized equipment. One parent shared that they had to choose between their two children because they could only afford to provide the necessary equipment for one child, despite both being equally competent.

- Access to facilities: Parents highlighted further structural barriers impeding their children's progression to advanced levels of competition. Specifically, they expressed significant concern regarding the inequitable distribution of sports and recreation opportunities across Calgary. For example, some parents noted that residents of Northeast Calgary lacked access to facilities, like those for curling. This geographical disparity, combined with the added challenge of transportation costs and time, effectively limited access to advanced training and competitive leagues for youth from these regions.

- Financial barriers: *"When you can't afford to play a game, it feels like it was only for a certain type of people that it is made for." (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
- Lack of investment in resources: *"There is a lack of investment in training, facilities and opportunities to grow within racialized clubs and associations. North East lacks funding, that's a fact. There's a lot of talent but no funding. It's a sad reality but if I let my son join a team in Foothills or the South where there is a lot of money and coaches and training available, they won't let him climb the ranks because everyone else is White and he is not. That's the mentality." (Racialized Parent - Interview)*

### 3.2.2 Lack of access to intangible and tangible resources

Coaches and youth also noted that many Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized youth did not have access to intangible resources like [networking, sponsorship and mentorship](#). Youth participants reported being unaware of, or denied opportunities to build essential [connections, receive specialized training, scholarships and invitations](#) to elite/exclusive competitions, making it even more

difficult to compete at higher levels. They stressed that in competitive sports, success often depended on access to these resources and may create significant barriers to progression and often contributed to their higher dropout rates from sports and recreation activities. The limited support from sports institutions for Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized youth resulted in less inclusive environments that discourage participation from marginalized communities.

- Lack of access to networking opportunities: *"I'm the only person of colour on my team. On the field we play together. But then I hear them talking about this invitation they got and that person is offering to mentor them. And I'm like, wait, I didn't get any invite. They are my team mates, same team, but they get opportunities I don't? How is that fair?" (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*

### 3.2.3 Under-representation in leadership and mentorship roles

Several participants noted that systemic racism is reflected in the [underrepresentation of racial minorities](#) in Calgary's sports environment- officials, management and administration. According to participants, when they don't see others who look like them or share their experiences in sports, it sends a message that these environments aren't for them. They described feelings of exclusion and marginalization, leading to a [lack of trust](#) in the system.

Most participants believe that this lack of diversity in sports leadership and management is [perpetuating unequal opportunities](#) for advancement, and is reinforcing the [marginalization](#) of Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized athletes in the city's sports culture. Youth respondents felt that the lack of representation as a systemic barrier to their access and success in sports, as representation leads to [role models and mentors](#) who can inspire and guide new participants.

Supplementing what youth participants shared, adult respondents emphasized that sports environments are a reflection of the larger society. Participants shared that if Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized groups are underrepresented, it creates a [disconnect](#) between the athletes and the communities they represent. This [diminishes trust](#) in the institutions and organizations governing sports because they might not appear to understand or care about the needs of diverse groups.

Some examples are included in the quotes below:

- Lack of empathy: *"It's like only non-White folks who sympathize with racism because they can understand what you're going through 'cause maybe they faced it too, you know. If they are not there, who will look out for us?" (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group).*
- Poor follow up: *"Coaches or refs who are not Caucasian, that makes you more comfortable when reporting a complaint. It feels like they would understand and coaches or management who aren't, can't understand. It's like they don't*



*see the problem. Any non Caucasian person, they'll know." (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)*

- *Lack of role models: "I want people who I can look up to who have gone through the same I have. It would be neat to have a role model, like someone to show me how they have done it when faced with racism and everything." (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
- *Lack of representation:*
  - *"When you don't see yourself in the game, when everyone who holds any kind of power is from one dominant race, it makes you not trust the whole system, see? And when you don't have trust in the system, you just stop playing all together. You're just like, okay, then I don't play the sport. So you just kind of take yourself away out of that environment." (Racialized/Black Parent - Focus group)*
  - *"People need to be in positions in management to change policy that affects people, right? And if they're not in those positions of decision making, then those decisions won't be made. It's not just race representation. It's like gender, women in sports too. Like, if there's women on a board, then equalizing pay would not be a problem" (White Coach - Focus Group)*



## THEME 4: IMPACTS OF RACISM

Indigenous, Black and Racialized youth and adults described how racism and discrimination impacts youth, and has a broader impact on their parents as well as their communities. They stressed the importance of psychological safety and wellbeing in a sporting environment as means to reduce the negative impacts of racism. Conversations with youth and parents emphasized that **psychological safety** of athletes is important for youth athletes as it provides a secure environment where they can perform at their best without fear of discrimination, bias, or marginalization. Most respondents agreed that when they feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to be open about their experiences, perform better, and seek support when needed. Participants shared that the constant stress of managing discriminatory, racist or biased behaviour has led to **social exclusion**, **reduced self-confidence**, and has caused **mental health challenges** such as anxiety or depression. An Indigenous youth participant discussed seeking support from a Sport Psychologist to deal with mental health challenges caused by instances of constant racism and discrimination while playing. Many youth participants also reported experiences of **suppressing their identity**, or **altering their behaviours to "fit in"** with the dominant culture of the sport they play.

### 4.1 Psychological insecurity and self doubt

Many participants indicated that their fear of being discriminated against creates a climate of **psychological insecurity**. This insecurity often hindered their ability to fully participate in sports, both in training and in competitions. Youth athletes shared that racism and discrimination contribute to a cycle of **self-doubt** where athletes feel they have to constantly prove their worth to their team members, coaches, referees and even to spectators in the stands. Youth athletes as well as parents stressed that dealing with racism takes an emotional toll and takes focus away from athletes' performance, self-development and growth. Participants strongly emphasized that constantly having to navigate these challenges causes them to question their place in the sport and their right to progress and succeed. This additional mental load can lead to **burnout** and a **lack of confidence** in their athletic ability.

- Self-doubt:
  - *"I would think I was really bad so I deserved the yelling. When I could actually see that I wasn't that bad because of the results of the competitions, that's when I realized this was racism. But it took me a long time to realize I was really good at the game." (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*
  - *"It's always a matter of doubt in your skill because of who you are. Always being told to do better, when you are clearly performing better than the others." (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)*

## 4.2 Social isolation

Several youth participants described feeling **socially isolated or unsupported** by teammates or coaches. They narrated experiences of being left out of social conversations, after game hangouts and locker room conversations. They shared that this created feelings of loneliness or alienation. Some participants feared that their teammates did not see them as equals or accepted them to their race. Selected quotes explaining these sentiments are illustrated below.

- Social exclusion: *"There were only two of us Native people on the team. And in like 7 practices, the others don't sit next to us. It makes us feel unwanted or uninvited. Yeah, not the best feeling when that happens."* (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)
- Feelings of alienation: *"I would feel very isolated while playing. My sport is a very White sport in Calgary. Often I was the only person of colour on my team. I've only made 3-4 friends in my 8-9 years of playing and only one of them is a White person."* (Racialized Youth - Focus group)
- Feeling othered: *"No one wanted to talk to me because no one wanted to be associated with the only Black girl on the team. They would tell me, oh you shouldn't be playing this sport. These comments would come from the audience, some guardians, parents."* (Black Youth - Focus group)
- Suppressing identity: *"I felt so embarrassed of having braids as a boy on the field. I was bullied for that and I eventually cut them off to fit in."* (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)

## 4.3 Loss of joy in the game and dropping out

Several parents and youth participants described a gradual loss of pleasure in participating in sports, after a few years of competitive sports, and attributed it to instances of continuous bias, discrimination and mistreatment. This sentiment was shared from participants across different sports, and different racial identities. Participants attributed it to being subjected to name calling, verbal abuse and race-based bullying from players and spectators, as well as unfair treatment in selection and training. They expressed that this led to a lack of motivation in continuing to play competitively, and many athletes left the sport altogether.

- Gradual loss of joy: *"The initial enthusiasm and excitement of joining the sport is just gone. I pushed myself harder and harder but my coach's behaviour never changed, even when I was winning competitions. And his behaviour wasn't the same with other girls on the team. There's no joy in playing anymore."* (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)

- Dropping out: *"When [my son] started as a kid, he loved the game. That's all he talked about. And he was getting better and winning more. Then issues started coming in, someone would call him something, tell him to go back where he came from, there's no place for him in this sport, no place for him in Canada. It just broke him. He doesn't play now."* (Racialized/Black Parent - Focus group)

#### 4.4 Impact of fear of racism

According to participants, the mere fear of racism causes significant stress for them, even when it is not directly related to the competition itself. They shared experiences of **anxiety and stress** that comes from the anticipating experiences of discrimination, exclusion, or microaggressions, which leave lasting impacts on their mental and emotional well-being. Participants felt that being in minority within their team or sport heightened their fear of being singled out or targeted due to their race.

- Fear of discrimination:
  - *"It feels like I have to constantly look over my shoulder in a game - always anticipating that someone will say or do something mean to me. I can't fully concentrate on the game."* (Black Youth - Focus group)
  - *"I'm very good, my performance, anyone will tell you that. My scores - they are better than my team, the best record in competitions. But it feels like I'm always getting yelled at by the ref, the coach. And I'm the only Brown girl on the team. That has to be the reason, right? So going into a game, I always had anxiety going for a game. Not because of any performance issues. But are they going to yell at me today? Are they going to swear at me today? Are they going to throw things at me today? Are my teammates going to help me today? That feeling of being anxious and nervous, that has nothing to do with the competition."* (Racialized Youth - Focus group)
  - *"This constant state of agitation, anticipation of what will my child face today? Will I be there when someone throws a horrible word at him? That makes me tense going for a game. You're nervous. What kind of a game is that when you feel nervous taking your child to a sport? Because the other kids and the parents will make you feel that way."* (Racialized/Black parent - Focus group)

#### 4.5 Hostile sports environments

Indigenous, Black and Racialized youth shared that reliance on community support plays an important role in fostering a sense of safety in hostile environments. Most participants, including parents and coaches, indicated that having a strong, supportive community around them provides emotional, psychological, and practical support, which can significantly and positively impact their well-being and performance in sports. Their responses described this in two ways:

- Feeling safe when they are around people of the same community: Athletes indicated that they often felt uncomfortable and stressed when playing against an all-White team. They shared facing open instances of racism from the stands when the spectators were mostly White. Many athletes felt that instances of name calling and bullying become more blatant when there are fewer people of colour at a game - either as players, officials or spectators.

- Emotional safety: *"When they're, like, in a game where a lot of our people are also there, nobody says nothing. It's all very polite like. But when they don't see our folks around, then the name calling and bad behaviour starts like real obvious. I feel safe when my people are around."* (Indigenous Youth - Focus group)

- Relying on parents' emotional support: Parents were often described by youth athletes as a constant source of emotional support, offering comfort and encouragement on and off the field. Many Indigenous, Black, Racialized youth participants shared that they rely on the presence and support of their parents to provide reassurance, helping them understand that their worth is not defined by negative experiences that they encounter in the sport. Parents also shared the same sentiments, reiterating that competitive sports can be a hostile environment for Racialized youth. Parents said that they felt they had to be hypervigilant during games and felt they had to hold the responsibility to protect their children in the face of racism.

- Parental support:
  - Youth: *"I never understood why mom was a locker mom until recently. If I was singled out because of my race, colour, whatever, she knew the other White girls would not stand up for me. They may not even realize what's happening. Even I didn't understand what was happening. I would be so upset and mad when people said stuff to me and my mom made me realize what it was. Racism - they were saying mean things. It's so sad. It's like you and your loved one have to make it so that it's not like that for you."* (Racialized/Black Youth - Focus group)
  - Parents: *"I go inside the locker room with my daughters, I know what happens in there. At least when I'm in there, the other girls pull back on comments. Not always, and not completely, but they do. Can you imagine what they say when I'm not around? That is stressful, shouldn't be like that when all anyone wants is to go and cheer for our kids".* (Racialized parent - Focus group)

# ANALYSIS

This section of the report highlights some of the key analytic insights from the engagement.

1. Racism and discrimination occur at many levels in sports in Calgary and is widespread.

- The findings from engagement sessions clearly indicate that racism and discrimination are experienced at interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels within Calgary's sports environment.
- Youth experiences ranged from verbal slurs, bullying, stereotyping and microaggressions both explicit and implicit. At the institutional level racism intensifies at a higher level of competition, biased decision-making and lack of accountability in reporting incidents. Systemic inequalities in funding and resource allocation, reflecting an issue that is prevalent throughout the sports landscape.
- Insights from conversations also reveal that racism in sports intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as gender, religion, culture, and socioeconomic status, creating layered vulnerabilities for individuals. Participants shared how their experiences of racism were compounded when combined with discrimination based on these other identities, leading to more intense and complex forms of marginalization. Therefore, authorities must adopt an intersectional approach to understand and address the unique challenges faced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities in sports.
- Racism leads to self-doubt, social exclusion, loss of joy in sports and insecurity. Participants feel isolated and feel that they need to constantly have to prove their worth. This ultimately takes an emotional toll and can prompt participants to either drop out or not play competitively.

2. Lack of transparency & accountability in reporting causes an erosion of trust in the system

- Another insight that emerged highlights that when incidents of racism go unaddressed or are handled in a non-transparent manner, it undermines diverse communities' trust in the system. Lack of transparency in accountability and reporting has created an environment where

Indigenous, Black and Racialized athletes feel unsafe, unsupported, and undervalued.

- Additionally, there is no common reporting structure across different types of sports, as well as different types of sport organizations/associations/clubs. This has led to confusion, and a disinterest in reporting for diverse communities, as participants do not fully understand who has jurisdiction and accountability for reporting and related actions for the sports they play.

# CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section synthesizes the key findings from the research to identify the pressing challenges related to racism in sport in Calgary. Building upon these challenges, significant strategies for positive change are outlined that provide actionable recommendations to foster a more equitable and inclusive sporting environment for all. This analysis aims to guide The City of Calgary and its partners in developing effective strategies and initiatives to support organizations in addressing systemic racism and promote a culture of respect and belonging in sports.

CHALLENGES	PROMISING STRATEGIES
ACCOUNTABILITY & ADVOCACY	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Unique Structures &amp; Varied Sports:</b> The diverse nature of different sports and their organizational structures make it difficult to implement consistent policies and practices to address racism and discrimination.</li> <li>2. <b>Lack of Clear Accountability:</b> Lack of clear accountability measures for addressing racism leads to confusion about responsibility structures and results in inaction.</li> <li>3. <b>Oversight of Sports Associations:</b> Ineffective oversight and accountability of diverse sports organizations leads to inconsistent handling of racism.</li> <li>4. <b>Inconsistent Policies:</b> Unclear policy and implementation jurisdictions add complexity to addressing racism, making it difficult to determine who is responsible for what actions.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Legal/Policy Changes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement and strengthen policies that specifically address racism and discrimination in sports, ensuring <u>clear reporting mechanisms</u>, <u>accountability measures</u>, and <u>consistent oversight</u> of sports organizations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Consistent Policy Implementation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure consistent implementation of anti-racism policies across all sports and levels of competition.</li> </ul> <p><b>Process Improvements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop clear, accessible, and transparent reporting processes for incidents of racism and discrimination.</li> </ul>
POLICY & PROCEDURE: REPORTING	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Complexity of Reporting:</b> Complex and cumbersome reporting processes, along with the need for "evidence," discourage individuals from filing complaints.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Prompt and Supportive Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take swift and visible action to support the athletes' complaints. This includes listening to their concerns, investigating incidents, and protecting their rights.</li> <li>• Simplify reporting processes, and provide clear instructions and feedback.</li> <li>• Provide support and resources for individuals who report incidents.</li> </ul>
ACCESSIBILITY: ECONOMIC BARRIERS	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Cost Barriers:</b> High costs associated with sports participation and progression create disparities, limiting access for individuals from marginalized communities.</li> <li>2. <b>Funding Inequities:</b> Sports facilities and opportunities in certain geographic areas (e.g. NE) are under-funded.</li> </ol>	<p>Address Economic Barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement programs and initiatives to reduce economic barriers to sports participation.</li> <li>• Ensure equitable access for all Calgarians, regardless of where they live.</li> </ul>
<b>CAPACITY BUILDING: CULTURAL SENSITIVITY &amp; RECONCILI-ACTION</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Lack of Reporting Knowledge:</b> There is a lack of knowledge about reporting thresholds and race-based complaint processes.</li> <li>2. <b>Lack of Cultural Awareness:</b> A lack of cultural awareness and education within the sporting culture (spectators, officials, management) creates barriers to participation.</li> </ol>	<p>Capacity Building through Education and Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize and address the systemic nature of racism for creating long-term, sustainable change,</li> <li>• Provide comprehensive cultural safety education and training for all interested parties involved in sports, including parents, athletes, referees, and coaches to create a more inclusive and understanding environment.</li> </ul> <p>Cultural Change Initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster a culture of inclusivity, respect, and belonging in sports environments through awareness campaigns, dialogue, and positive role modeling.</li> <li>• Undertake actions to support Reconciliation.</li> </ul> <p>Representation and Role Models:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase representation of Indigenous, Black, and diverse Racialized individuals in coaching, officiating, and leadership positions to provide role models and mentors.</li> </ul>
<b>RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING &amp; SUSTAINABILITY</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Lack of Trust:</b> Past experiences and lack of transparency leads to a lack of trust in the system's ability to effectively address racism.</li> </ol>	<p>Community Involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage community members in the development and implementation of solutions, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility.</li> </ul> <p>Involve Outside System Actors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize and acknowledge that racism and discrimination in sports is a manifestation of external and deep-seated societal issues.</li> <li>• Engage external actors to provide supplemental culturally appropriate support to athletes. E.g. Provide access to mental health support (Sport Psychologist) for affected athletes.</li> </ul>



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## APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Abuse of power:** When positions of power are misused to take advantage of individuals. Abuse of power can be physical or verbal. (Canadian Civil Liberties Association [CCLA], n.d.).

**Anti-Racism:** The practice of actively identifying, opposing, and eliminating racism in its many oppressive forms (e.g. racial prejudice, systemic racism, etc.) within our policies, practices, and procedures. (Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police, 2022).

**Bullying:** The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological (Anti-Bullying Alliance, n.d.). When the hurting behaviour arises from bias or

**Colonization:** Occurs when one nation or a group of people subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it, often while imposing its own values, laws, and beliefs. (Blakemore, 2019).

**Discrimination:** An action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age, religion, colour, marital status, ethnic origin, gender, sexuality or disability. These reasons, also called grounds, are protected under the Canadian Human Rights Act (Canadian Human Rights Commission [CHRC], n.d.).

**Emotional Abuse:** A type of abuse in which words are used to control someone, or instill fear. This includes threats, yelling, insults, preventing an individual from contacting friends or family, humiliation, intimidation, criticism, and insulting an individual's religion (Department of Justice Canada, 2022).

**Explicit Bias/Prejudice:** A negative attitude or belief towards a specific group that an individual is aware of on a conscious level. Explicit bias is characterized by overt negative behaviours based on associations between particular qualities and social identities, such as race, which can be expressed through physical or verbal harassment or through subtle means such as exclusion (National Centre for Cultural Competence, n.d.).

**Harassment:** A form of discrimination that includes any unwanted physical or verbal behaviour that offends or humiliates an individual. Generally, harassment is a behaviour that persists over time. Serious one-time incidents can also sometimes be considered harassment (Alberta Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2017).

**Hate:** The Alberta Human Rights Commission defines hate as a "harmful action against a person or property that is based on an unreasonable opinion about the other person's identity. Hate often relates to race, colour, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender expression, and other personal characteristics. Hate is discrimination under the [Alberta Human Rights Act](#) if it is based on one or more protected grounds and in one or more protected areas. Some hateful

actions can also lead to criminal charges, often called hate crimes” ([Alberta Human Rights Commission, 2024](#)).

**Hate Activity:** Comments or actions against a person or group motivated by bias, prejudice or hate based on race, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, marital status, family status, sexual orientation or any other similar factor. Examples are: hate crime, hate propaganda, advocating genocide, telephone/electronic communication promoting hate, and publicly displaying hate in notices, signs, symbols and emblems (City of Toronto, 1998).

**Implicit Bias/Prejudice:** A negative and automatic association, of which one is not consciously aware, towards a specific group. Implicit bias is often based on learned associations between particular qualities and social identities, including race. Individuals’ perceptions and behaviors can be influenced by the implicit biases they hold, even if they are unaware they hold such bias (Payne & Hannay, 2021).

**Intersectionality:** A prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism interacts with patriarchy, heterosexist, classism, xenophobia — seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems create specific kinds of challenges.

**Institutional Racism:** Policies, practices, procedures, and culture of an institution/organization/system that work better for one group, and cause harm to others whether inadvertently or unintentionally. The racism within an organization can also be described as systemic across an organization (Elias & Paradies, 2021).

**Interpersonal Racism:** The interactions between groups/people within an institution. Racism that occurs between individuals based on implicit or explicit biases (Kornienko, Rambaran & Rivas-Drake, 2022).

**Internalized Racism:** Racism that exists within individuals. For example, xenophobic feelings or internalized sense of oppression (The CARED Collective, 2020).

**Lived Experience:** Personal knowledge about the world gained through direct, first-hand experience rather than through representations constructed by other people.

**Racialization:** Racialization is the very complex and contradictory process through which groups come to be designated as being part of a particular "race" and on that basis subjected to differential and/or unequal treatment. Put simply, "Racialization [is] the process of manufacturing and utilizing the notion of race in any capacity. While White people are also Racialized, this process is often rendered invisible or normative to those designated as White. As a result, White people may not see themselves as part of a race but still maintain the authority to name and Racialize "others" (The CARED Collective, 2020).

**Racial Justice:** Racial Justice addresses structural and systemic racism in programs, services, policies and systems to ensure everyone is treated equitably including Indigenous, Black and diverse Racialized Peoples (The City of Calgary. (2023).

**Racial Prejudice:** A set of discriminatory and or derogatory attitudes based on assumptions derived from perceptions about race, ethnicity, or religious background (Huddy & Feldman, 2009).

**Racial Profiling:** When an individual is subjected to differential treatment or greater scrutiny because of negative stereotypes related to their race or other grounds such as religious beliefs, colour, ancestry or place of origin or a combination of these. These are carried out by people in authority for reasons of safety, security and public protection (Alberta Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2012).

**Racial slur:** Harmful or insulting terms directed towards a group of people based on assumptions related to race. The harm caused by some slurs is understood, while others may be used in everyday speech with little understanding of their harm (National Education Association [NEA] Center for Social Justice, 2021).

**Racism:** Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or group based on being a part of a racial or ethnic group, particularly one already marginalized. There are four levels of racism. (Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police 2022.).

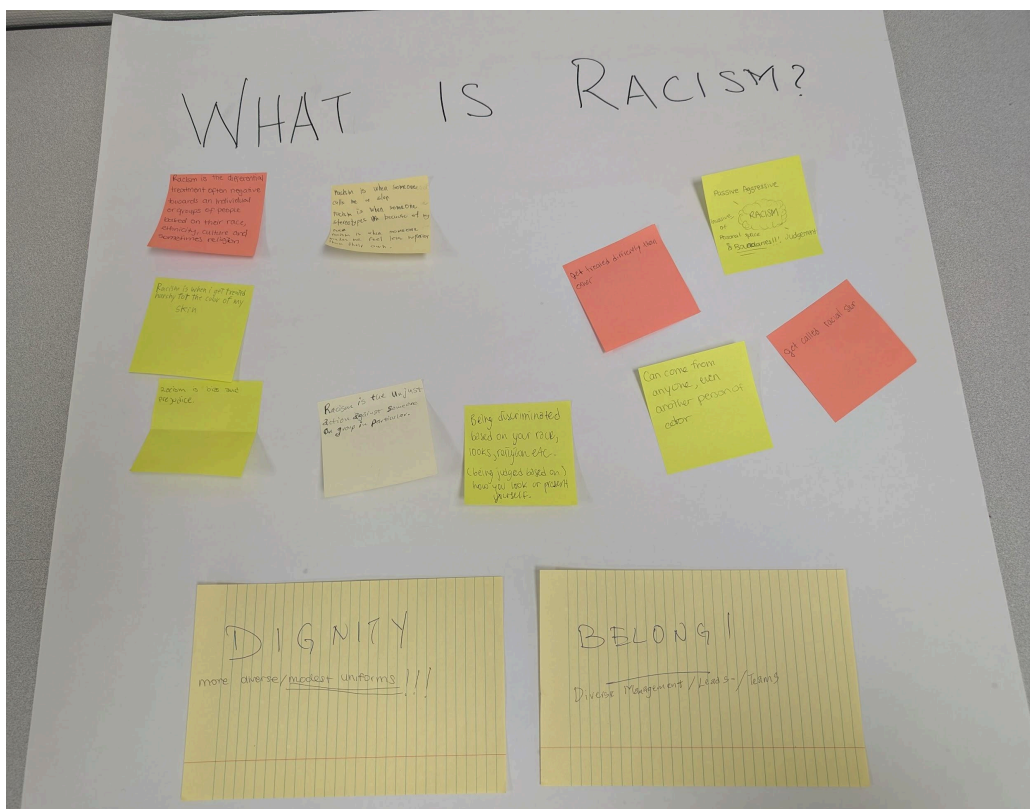
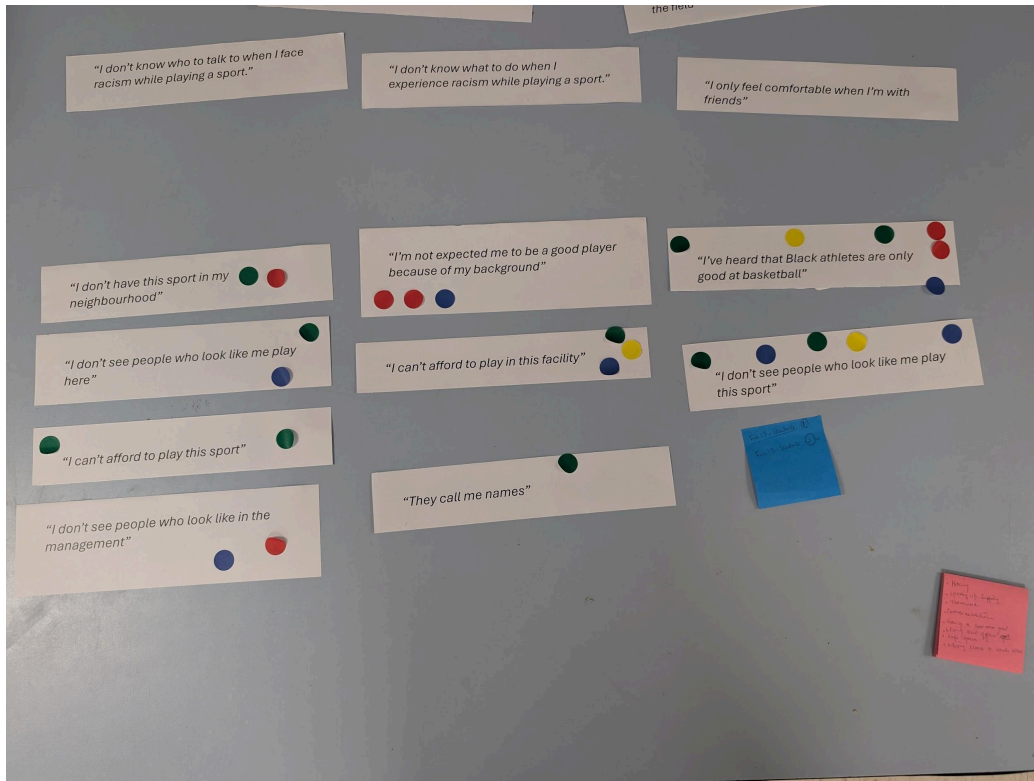
**Stereotype:** Generalized judgements and assumptions of people based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, and other characteristics. Stereotypes may have positive implications (i.e. being athletic), but ultimately remain harmful to the people it involves (James, 2004).

**Systemic Racism:** Systemic racism is embedded in policies, practices and procedures of our society's institutions and works to create and/or maintain racial inequity. It is often caused by hidden institutional biases in policies, practices and processes that privilege or disadvantage people based on race and the intersections of identities (Gunn, 2016).

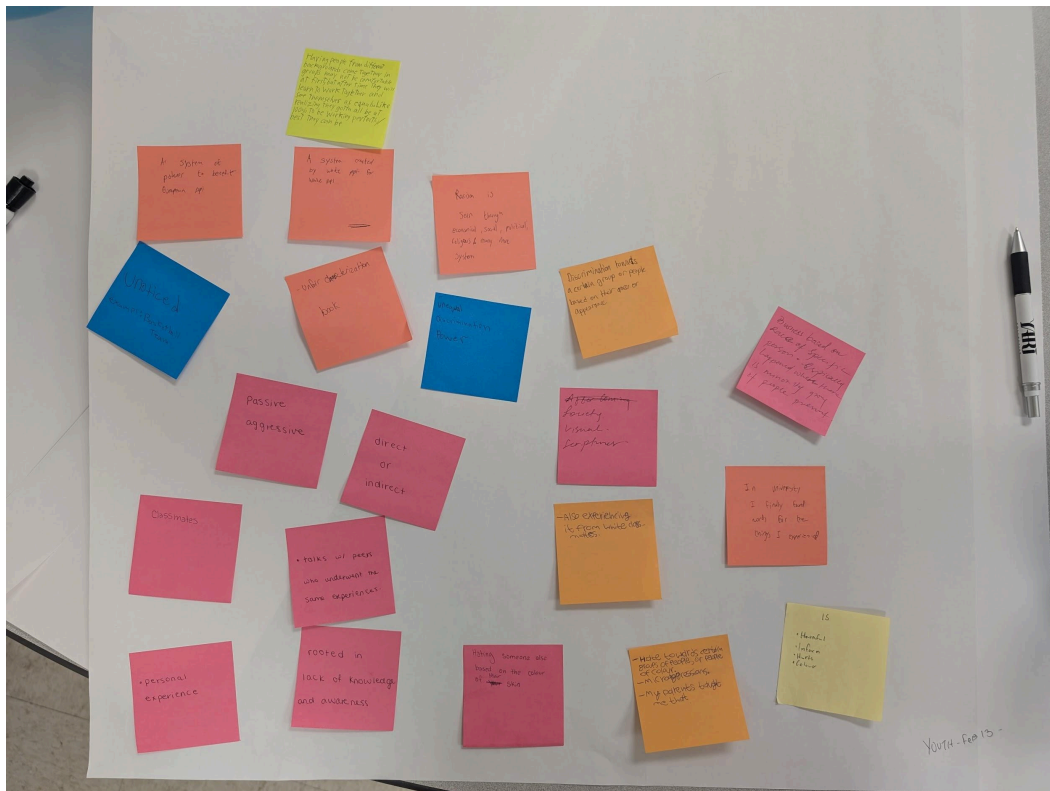
**Verbal abuse/harassment:** Verbal abuse is a type of abusive behaviour, including name-calling, threats, blaming, and insults (Edmonton Police Service, n.d.). According to the Alberta Human Rights Commission (2017), verbal abuse falls under the umbrella of verbal harassment. Verbal harassment is a type of harassment, in which any verbal behaviour that is offensive or humiliates an individual.

## APPENDIX B. RACISM DEFINITION MAPPING - SELECTED IMAGES

### YOUTH:

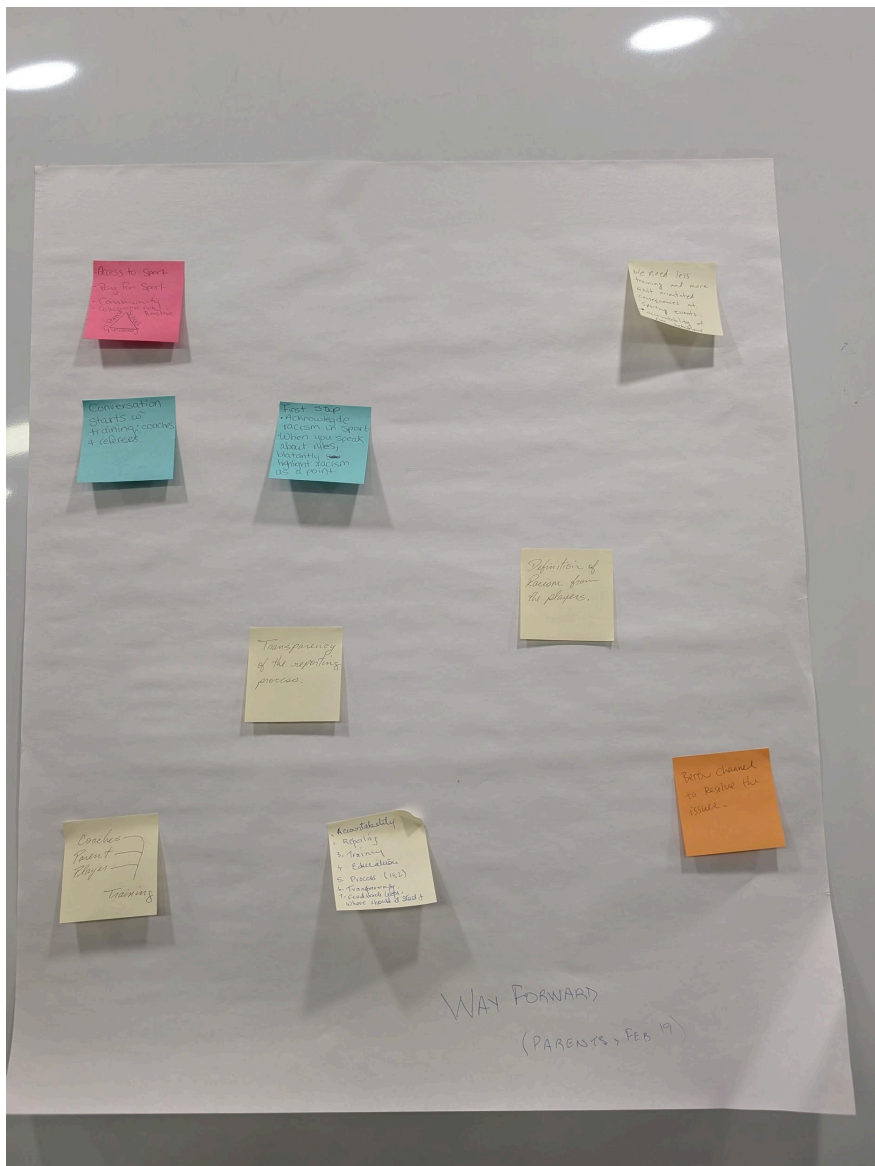


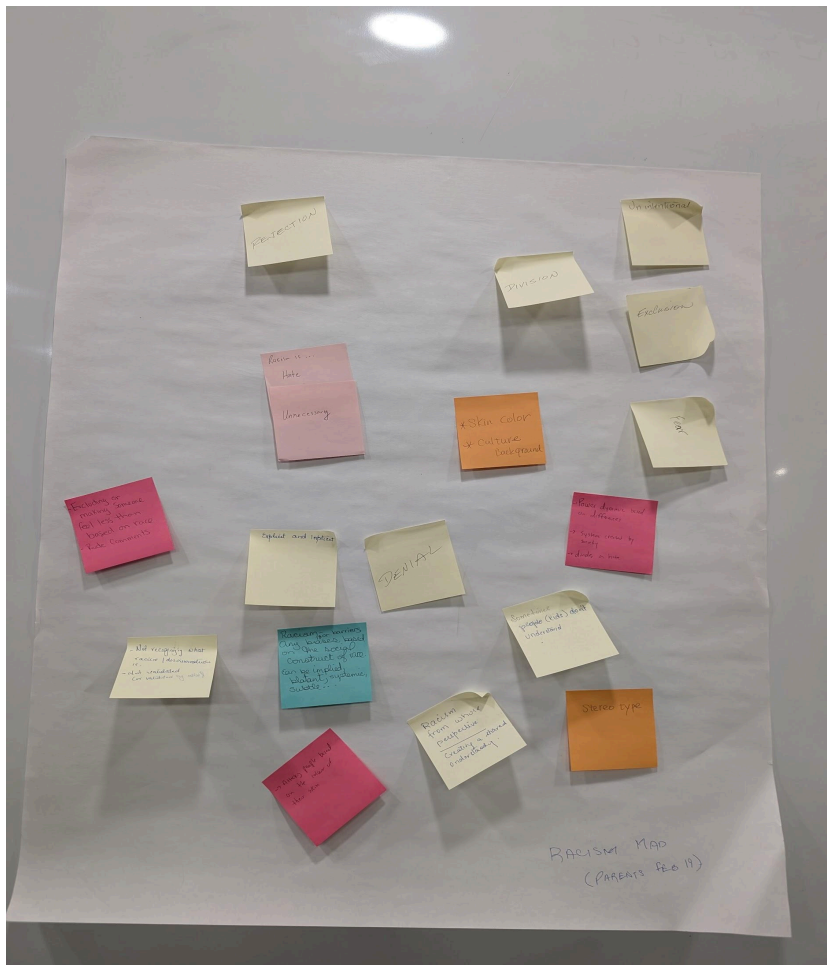




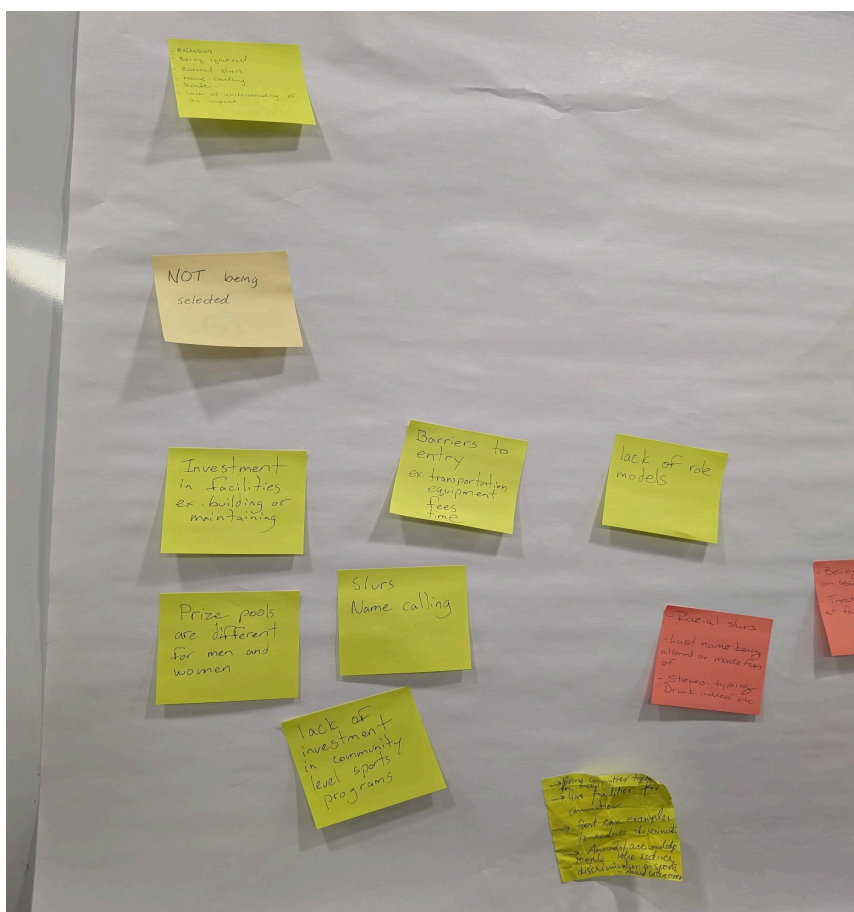
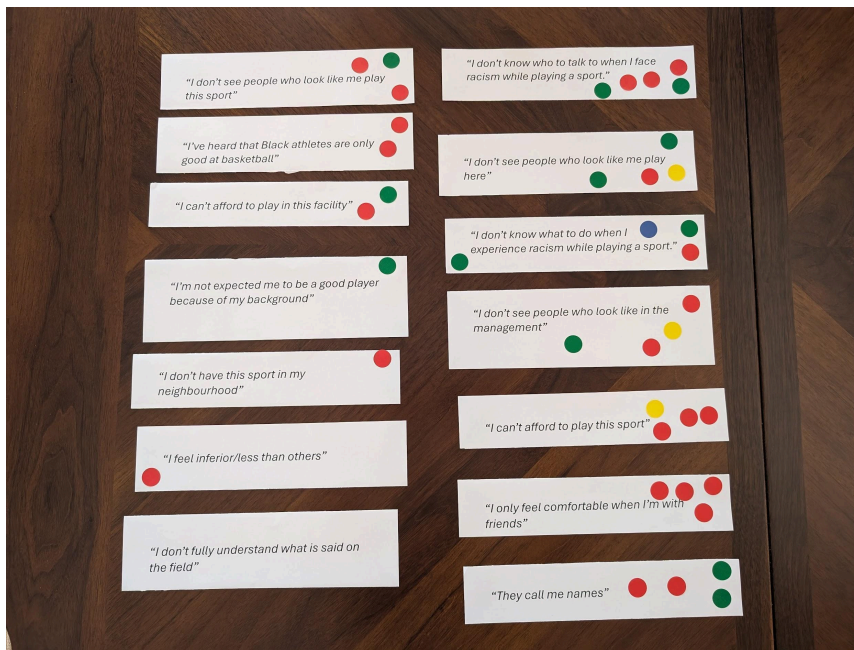


## PARENTS:

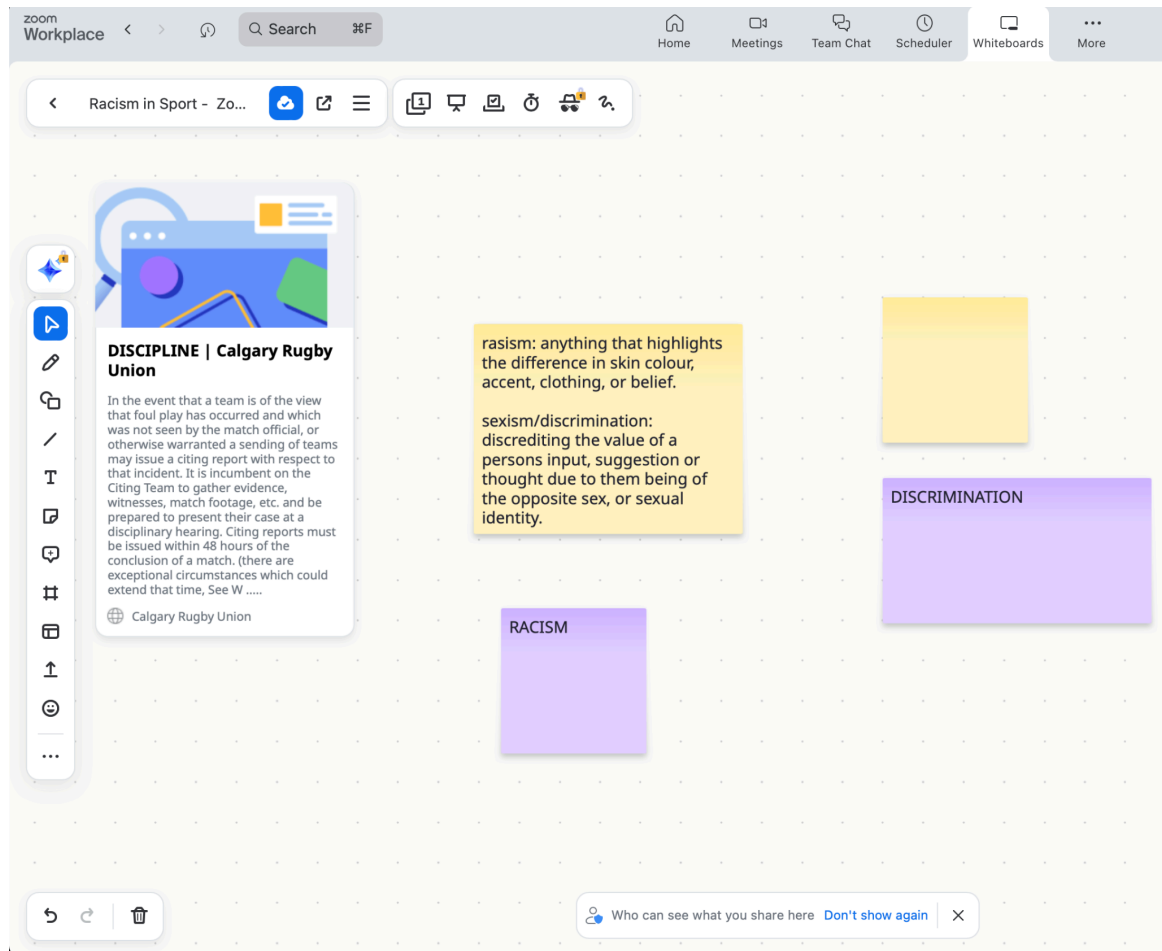




## COACHES:



REFEREES:



## APPENDIX C: SESSION PLAN QUESTION EXAMPLES

The City of Calgary Racism in Sport Project  
Action Dignity Society/ Habitus Consulting Collective  
Session Plan for Youth  
Tuesday, January 28, 2025; 6.00 – 8.00pm

### Session Design Approach

- ❖ Activity-based, non-competitive gamification

#### Rationale:

- Drawing on the principles of equity and inclusion, activity-based gamification allows all participants to approach, enter and exit an event as equals.
- It is designed for inclusivity where all participants share the same learning and participating goals, as there are no winners or losers.
- It allows space for everyone present (including facilitators and notetakers) to be equal participants in all discussions, thus giving agency to participants to co-lead, participate or not participate in an activity.
- It acknowledges and accommodates that all participants have unique and non-comparable strengths and competencies.
- The session plan accounts for diversity in age, ability, neurodiversity, gender, sexuality, religion etc.
- Trauma-informed and anti-racist lens is applied to the activities.

### Activity 1: Participant Introductions & Connection to Sports

- Name, pronouns any other way to introduce yourself.
- What sport do you play?
- Why do you play the sport that you do/What do you like about playing this sport?

### Activity 2: Creating a Definition Map - 'What racism means'

#### Goal:

- To understand what racism/discrimination means to the participants.
- To co-create an understanding of 'racism', discrimination'..... with the participants using the trauma-informed approach of allowing participants to shape the conversation by developing their own understanding of what racism/discrimination means.

#### Activity:

- ❖ Co-create posters depicting 'Racism' There will be 2 large blank posters on the wall that the participants will fill. Post its etc. provided.

### Questions:

- Ask: What does racism or discrimination in sport look like to you? What does it mean to you?
  - There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think.

*Keep these posters prominently displayed throughout the session. These posters will be the guiding tool for the rest of the session.*

- Ask:
  - What do you see on the posters?
  - As you wrote those things, what came to your mind?
  - What is missing?
- ❖ *For this activity, different statements about sports-related racism and discrimination (e.g. stereotyping, name calling, intimidation etc.) will be added to Activity 2 Posters.*
  - *Examples: "I don't see people who look like me play this sport" "I'm not expected to be a good player because of my background" "I feel inferior/less than others while playing" "They call me names" "I can't afford to play this game" "We don't have this sport in my neighbourhood" etc.*
- ❖ *One facilitator introduces the next activity; the other facilitator puts up statements reflecting different types of racism/discrimination in sport all around the posters.*

### Activity 3: Sharing Experiences of Racism in Sport

#### Goal:

- To understand the lived experiences of racism and discrimination in sports.

#### Activity:

- Instructions: Now let's talk about any experiences with racism and discrimination you had while playing sports here in Calgary.
- All around the room, you can see different statements that show how racism and discrimination can show up in sports. If you have experienced this - take a sticker and place it on it (dot stickers). If there are things missing - add them.
- In 5-7 minutes, invite everyone to gather around the facilitators to have a chat.
- Conduct a group discussion (1 or 2 groups, depending on the number of participants).

#### Followup Questions & probes:

1. As you looked at these posters, did you feel connected to any experience of racism while playing sports in Calgary?
  - a. Have you ever experienced racism directed at you while playing sports?
    - i. How did you know it was racism? What happened?
  - b. Have you ever heard a racial slur while playing sports?
    - i. What happened? Who said it and why? How did it make you feel? What was done about it?



2. Think about your own experiences of playing sports in a facility in Calgary. How do you feel in these places?
  - a. Do you feel like you belong?
  - b. What makes you feel welcome or not welcome?
  - c. Do you feel safe? Why or why not?
3. What did you do when faced with incidents of racism? Have you ever reported an incidence of racism?
  - a. Do you know how to report racism?
  - b. Who did you report to and get support from?
  - c. Has reporting worked in the past?
  - d. If you didn't report it, why didn't you?
4. Have you ever felt that racism is just something you have to deal with if you want to be part of sports?
  - a. Have you ever felt like leaving a sport or a team because of it - or have you left?
5. What are some other experiences you have had that have not been mentioned?
6. Have you ever experienced a change in your mental health due to racism you experienced in sports? I.e. feeling down, frustrated, angry, discouraged etc.
  - o Did you reach out for supports? What/who helped you?

Share back:

- Facilitators to take 5 minutes to summarize and share back what was heard.
- Before moving on to the next activity, facilitators to take note if anyone has been impacted by sharing these experiences and needs support.

### Activity 5: Ideal Journey Mural - Creating a joint vision

Goal:

- To understand what an ideal sports environment, free from racism, would look like in Calgary.
- To jointly create an artefact that depicts the collective vision of the group of an ideal sports environment in Calgary.

Activity:

- Ask: What would you like to see changed in sports and recreation?
- Topic of discussion:
- What should an ideal experience of playing a sport look like?
  - o For example: a space where I can see other players like me; where I can see coaches who look like me; where I can see sports from my culture being played etc.
  - o What needs to happen to create this?
  - o For example: an environment where I feel like I belong; where I feel safe; where I feel comfortable etc.
- Ask probing questions, for example,
  - o What do you mean by that? What actions would you like to see?
  - o Can you share more? Can you provide an example?

Questions & probes:

- What does your vision of a Calgary that is inclusive and anti-racist look or feel like?
  - o If you could control your sport environment, would you change it?

- What would you change? What would you keep the same?
    - What needs to change to make this happen?
    - What would you change if you could?
- What would make you feel more comfortable/safe?
- Do you know of anything that is already happening in your community that is effective in combating racism?

## Conclusion; Next Steps; Bridging to Peer Support