

All Cultures Webinar 1 – Setting the scene and making connections

Please find below a selection of questions posed both during and after Webinar 1 in the All Cultures Webinar series, and answers provided by our panel of guest presenters. If you have any further questions please contact the following people:

Ralph Barba: Four Diegos Media, fourdiegos@bigpond.com / www.fourdiegosmedia.com

Patrick Skene: Red Elephant Projects, patrick@redelephantprojects.com / www.redelephantprojects.com/

James Demetriou: Sports Without Borders, James.Demetriou@sportswithoutborders.org / <http://sportswithoutborders.org/>

Linda Muir: Australian Sports Commission, linda.muir@ausport.gov.au / www.ausport.gov.au

Questions and Answers

As a sporting club with a large Pacific Islander community we have an issue with players being available to play on Sundays due to religious reasons. As we don't have control over the days that certain age groups play do you have any solutions on how we can keep these participants engaged in the sport?

Patrick: The hardest question first up!! The challenge you are facing is one that has dogged grassroots sports administrators for the last 100 years where sports have been increasingly played on Sundays.

First of all in understanding the barrier it is worth noting that the 'Sunday sport' issue means different things to different people. For some community members there is a structural problem with any activities on a Sunday linked to a literal interpretation of the bible. For others, it is perceived as a competitor or a major distraction and if these barriers can be overcome there is a solution available.

For some conservative Christians, breaking the 4th commandment (Remember the Sabbath day, keep it holy) is a non-negotiable. This issue has played out across the world and best captured in the movie Chariots of Fire in which 400m gold medal Scotsman and conservative Christian Eric Liddell refused to run in the Olympic finals on a Sunday. Michael Jones, the legendary NZ All Black and Christian refused to play on Sundays and it eventually cost him his spot on the team. More recently Scottish prop Euan Murray (Rugby Union) lost his spot due to not playing on Sunday. Another famous case was Amazulu the Zimbabwean football champions who were kicked out of their league as they are Seventh Day Adventists (who observe Saturday as the Sabbath) and would not compromise on game scheduling.

At grassroots level, the Sunday sport dilemma often plays out on a church by church basis. A famous grassroots case was Hanover township in New Jersey, USA when eight churches pushed for a total ban on Sunday Sports. The main fear of Sunday sport in this case was the impact sport had on declining church attendances or in the case of attendees, having kids in sports uniforms itching to get out of the church and play. The compromise reached in this case was for Sunday Sport to start after 1pm.

In Australia this barrier was overcome by the introduction of Saturday evening masses in which athletes could still fulfil their weekly attendance obligations and be free to play sport on Sunday. Religion and sport have proved they can work in harmony if there is clear communication and the spirit of compromise between the parties.

Some solutions as follows:

1. Scheduling – Putting in a request to have games scheduled on other days of the week. This is often a difficult thing to achieve unless the majority of the playing base is faced with this barrier. Changing schedules around a single minority religious group can cause problems with the other participant groups over preferential treatment.
2. Modified/midweek competitions – Starting a competition with alternative and more suitable scheduling to increase participation with groups unable or unwilling to play in the existing schedule. i.e. a Wednesday night competition. This could be set up in co-operation with other clubs who are faced with similar challenges.

3. Direct engagement with priest/pastor – Directly engaging with the priest/pastor to identify the barriers and jointly find a complementary solution that has his/her blessing. In the case of the Samoan community the priest/pastor may assist you with a solution if you engage respectfully. In the US, Pacific Island church communities have worked around this by running a Saturday night “Athletes Night” turning it into a community strengthening exercise. In return for attendance, athletes receive special dispensation to play on Sundays for the season duration. Priests/pastors are generally sensible and practical people who are able to influence the community if their needs are taken care of. They are often fans of sport and are aware of the benefits of participation. Engaging with a community leader such as a Priest/Pastor also offers benefits to mainstream club or association leaders providing a capacity building opportunity to build your own personal cultural engagement skills and competence.
4. Involve the church in the sport – Other strategies include inviting the priest/pastor to be part of the club. In the US, “faith nights” sponsored by local baseball teams draw the entire congregation to the ball park. This also needs to be managed and an example is the recent restriction of pre-game, on-field prayer circles by Pacific Community rugby league players in western Sydney because it excluded the non Christian team members.
5. Enter a team in a religious competition – If the Sunday barrier is insurmountable a final strategy to enable participation is to enter a team in a faith based competition that plays according to Christian scheduling. Christian examples include:

<http://www.cffa.org.au/>
http://www.ncfc.asn.au/links_oth_christian_assocs.htm
<http://www.nswcfa.com.au/>
<http://nswccu.nsw.cricket.com.au/>
<http://www.hccf.org.au/>
<http://www.vcsa.org.au/>
http://www.sportingpulse.com/assoc_page.cgi?c=1-39-0-0-0
<http://www.cfabm.org.au/>

Ralph: A state sporting organisations community/multicultural officer should be working with Pacific Islander community drivers to find a solution. A number of sports have adjusted fixtures and scheduling to cater for these situations.

James: I struck this with the Burmese communities. After lengthy discussions around time commitments and types of sports they liked, we made some enquiries with local sports and state sporting organisations and found that most of the young people could do sport after hours during the week and that in many cases there were local clubs that had night competitions or shortened versions of sports they liked. This will not apply to most sports but to soccer, basketball and netball etc. there were many night competitions available, as well as Saturdays. The ASC Active After-School Communities program has staff in each region who know where these clubs are www.ausport.gov.au/aasc. In effect the Burmese communities found a solution. Much of the initial pushback was driven by parents wanting their kids to study and discouraging them from playing sport.

Does Sports without Borders allow recent arrivals to nominate what sport they want to participate in or just funnel potential participants towards specific sports or activities? If the program determines where people's interest lay, are there statistics available on the interests and levels of interests? *Please note that this question was directed to James however Patrick and Ralph have responded generally to the question.

James: All of the activities and programs Sports without Borders has conducted have been decided by the young people. We do not push programs for different sports down young people’s throats. Your comments are not uncommon where many parents and communities are unhappy with sporting organisations that push programs on to young people to fit their funding requirements.

The most common sports or activities that we have funded on pure demand (in order) are soccer, tennis, basketball, athletics and AFL.

Patrick: The market is currently fragmented as far as the sporting options that are available to new arrivals. In the absence of a national or state wide formal sport integration program, the natural preferences of new arrivals are more likely to be the major global culturally embedded sports i.e. basketball, football and cricket.

Unfortunately sport is not yet classed as a formal and essential settlement service so the options available are dependent on the sporting options offered by the local councils, sporting club, school, migrant resource centre, language school or non-governmental organisation provider.

With sport as a key pillar of the Inclusion and Integration agenda, ideally every new migrant should be offered the chance to participate in at least 20 sports that have facilities within 20kms of their residence. Such a program would give access to both culturally embedded global sports and unfamiliar sports such as Australian Football.

Ralph: I find that the sport new arrivals choose tends to be influenced by what happens at school. PE teachers or other teachers might spot talent and encourage and organise for them to join local club or via friendship groups at school who are already at clubs. An older sibling also can be an influence to which sport a male or female from CALD background might play. In my experience the introduction to sport is made by someone the person/family trusts and then sporting organisations take over.

Linda: A targeted approach to engaging CALD communities can assist sports with their programs. Some key questions sporting organisations should address to assist with their program development are:

- Are there particular ethnic groups that your sport appeals to?
- Are there already groups established within your sport from particular ethnic communities?
- Are there particular geographical regions where there are a high proportion of residents from one or more CALD communities (eg. refer to DIACs Community Information Summaries at www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/statistics/comm-summ and Settlement Reporting Facility at www.immi.gov.au/settlement)

Funding can help to get a pathway into regular sport off the ground, but how can we continue to subsidise participation when that funding dries up? In my experience local sporting clubs that are willing to help have struggled to support ongoing participation financially.

Patrick: Until sport is formally recognised as a settlement service alongside housing, health, legal, language and education, subsidies for new migrants to participate in sport will continue to come from a patchwork mix of the sporting clubs' generosity, sponsors, government agencies, state sporting organisations, national sporting organisations and community grant programs.

Sporting clubs have a limit to the amount of free/subsidised registrations they can supply to new migrant children before it has an impact on them financially and places further strain on the existing volunteer club structure.

Ralph: It's important that program drivers set about empowering those from CALD communities they attract in the early stages of their involvement in the sport. The ones who become passionate about the sport will drive the program for their own community going forward. Capacity building, empowerment, opportunity and of course partnerships (council, business, other) are the elements that make programs sustainable.

James: This is not the case from Sports without Borders experience. We have subsidised CALD children to participate in sport over the past 5 years and have found that if you heavily subsidise individuals in the first year and then reduce assistance each following year, e.g. 1st yr. - 100%, 2nd yr. - 75% and 3rd year – 25-50%, very few kids have left clubs once in a club system for 2- 3 years. In fact in one region we assisted a group for a sports micro bank which saw parents borrow amounts for equipment and fees and then repaid the money over a year from Centrelink payments.

What is so important is how welcoming the club is to the needs of newly arrived communities. One thing we have worked with local government on is selecting the CALD friendly clubs.

Linda: The ASC advises all partners working in the CALD area to invest time and resources in planning, monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure the long term sustainability of the program. Some important areas to be included in the

planning are: engaging and building relationships with the respective community; building the capacity of the community; partnering with a cross section of government, business and community stakeholders; and provision of an ongoing support network for education and advice (i.e. doesn't have to be financial.)

Should sporting organisations approach 2nd and 3rd generation migrants?

Patrick: Yes. To engage deeply with limited resources national sporting organisations, state sporting organisations and clubs should segment the market and identify the most relevant communities to target with a customised strategy framing the sport for that community's worldview. Determining the most relevant communities is an exercise in applying a matrix depending on the key elements in playing the sport – i.e. physical contact sports for larger framed communities, existing ancestral community sport preferences e.g. diving and table tennis for the Chinese community, cricket for the Indian community, and basketball for the Sudanese community.

Ralph: I would think that for 2nd and 3rd generation new arrival migrants it would be a perfect fit. Most would gravitate to sport they are traditionally or culturally interested in. This doesn't mean that they don't go the other way to a sport that is completely new to them. AFL and cricket are making inroads in attracting participants from the Horn of Africa. Again the catalyst for this in my experience is school/friendship groups.

Linda: Information on the experiences of new arrivals indicates that in the first five years of establishment for a new arrival, the priorities are employment, housing and education. Sport may not be a priority for many new arrivals.

Priorities for 2nd and 3rd generation migrants however are different, and sport has more relevance or importance. Sporting organisations should seek to engage with these migrants as they are part of our society - living, working and attending schools in our community.

How do sports at state sporting organisations and club level meet the sometimes conflicting needs of the newer communities and the sport itself – e.g. requests for funding, equipment, facilities - without there being a benefit to the sport?

Patrick: The benefit for the sport is increased participation which is a key measure of any government funding program at local, state and national level. If a sport is meeting its charter of engaging all of the communities, then providing equipment or facilities to enable participation to any specific group should not provide a conflict.

The key is for sports to develop more sustainable funding platforms through partnerships to ensure that they have the supply to meet the community demand. In future, access to funding at club, state and national level will be contingent on inclusion and diversity being at the centre of their operation model including subsidising new migrant registrations, equipment etc.

Ralph: This is not easy as one size does not fit all. It's important that sports find a champion for their sport and support that person in being an ambassador for their sport in their community. They understand the issues more than anyone and with their passion for the sport they will find innovative ways to meet challenges.

James: I believe that if all young people are not playing sport or doing some form of physical activity then the benefit is not there for us as a community. The cost of sport, time constraints on kids and lack of parental involvement are things that cause kids not to play sport. To not offer kids equipment and fees when the demand is so high, would be to the sports detriment. There is huge demand on services such as ours from kids wanting to join and play in a local club which can ultimately provide a social inclusion outcome. If more youth from CALD backgrounds are playing sport then that would benefit the sport and the community. Also when there are more children in sport it means that you widen and deepen the talent pool.

Linda: Engaging multicultural communities presents an opportunity for sports to increase their participant and volunteer numbers and enriches the cultural fabric of the team, club or association. There should be no as conflict – the sport and greater community are the beneficiaries.

Whose role is it to work with the newer communities to set up independent sport clubs? The understanding of club structure, roles and responsibilities are not necessarily there within communities. At state level this is a very real issue.

Patrick: Capacity building of clubs run by new migrants is a major issue when compared to clubs that have been running for, in some cases, over 100 years. The responsibility lies with the State Sporting Organisations, the Regional Associations, and Local Council Sport, Youth and Recreation departments.

There are a number of successful new migrant run sporting clubs such as the Heidelberg Stars and Southern Dragons, both in Melbourne, and the key platform of success is having the right type of people in place who can be upskilled and grow into their defined roles.

Local council leadership programs are an excellent place to source people who want to make a difference and the participating kids parents are an obvious group to work with. A number of S state sporting organisations and programs such as VicHealth's Everyone Wins toolkit and the RMIT Club Management course are working on capacity building programs for new migrant club administrators covering structure, process, governance, committee roles, managing volunteers etc.

James: The key to this are local government bodies working with state sporting organisations. We work very closely with councils such as City of Monash and Moonee Valley. There is a clear need to provide training to newly arrived communities in forming clubs etc. and the ASC, state sporting organisations and local government and groups like Sports without Borders have part to play in this. It is an issue I agree.

Linda: The traditional club structure is not generally understood by people from multicultural backgrounds, particularly, newly arrived migrants and refugees. Many people argue that integration into the Australian community should be an early priority, as there can be other long term social issues that can develop if social integration is neglected. Sport is seen as an important tool for this, and the federal government sees new arrivals as a priority group to enhance inclusion into community. As such, all levels of the system need to work to ensure sport is accessible being federal, state and local government as well as all levels of sporting organisations.

Organisations at the community or grassroots level are integral to work in this area. Webinar 2 – Creating Opportunities, will delve right down into the detail of how clubs and local associations work with migrant communities - we will showcase examples of how sport, service providers working with CALD communities and people from CALD backgrounds have been working together to create more opportunities to participate. The presenters will talk about their experiences, sharing the successes, challenges and key learning's that can help you in future program design and delivery. This webinar will be held on Thursday, 5th April – register now at:

http://www.ausport.gov.au/participating/all_cultures/get_involved/cald_webinar_series

We don't always get it right as clubs in this area. How can we provide a positive experience and keep people from migrant backgrounds engaged and coming back each season?

Patrick: All communities respond to deep and long term engagement rather than sporadic. Every club should engage with its resident communities until they no longer feel marginalised and feel part of mainstream sport.

A core sporting club's role is to service the whole community and not a single segment of the community so it is key to continue genuine engagement through community leaders and key influencers, identify the barriers to participation and develop strategies to overcome them.

Ralph: It's all about trust and relationships. Treat them like everyone else at the club – respect, inclusion, capacity build and empower. They don't want special treatment, just to be heard and accommodated for like every other player at the club.

James: A number of clubs have clear guidelines to assist families feel inclusive. So if they can do it then other clubs can. A lot of it is hard work and encouragement and also positioning your club at the right entry point. Most clubs will succeed if they gain the trust of communities via their local migrant resource centre officers and via the schools and have strong local government support. This has been evident in programs such as our recent DIAC funded project. Many communities see sport as secondary to their family's needs so migrant resource centres and local government groups need to show the role of sport in Australia and its benefits to education and health outcomes and then assist the families with funds to have their kids join clubs of their choice.

Linda: Sporting organisations need to invest in cultural awareness training to ensure their sports are accessible, welcoming and inclusive with supporting policies, resources and products. This will assist in the provision of a positive experience for all participants.

I would be interested to know what the panels thoughts were on Indigenous Australians and the relevance some of the CALD research / findings has to this group?

Patrick: It is key to note that the Indigenous community is a broad and multi segmented community.

Some are disadvantaged and many are financially independent and any strategy needs to be framed to meet these segments.

Often Indigenous strategies are based totally on the disadvantaged sector of the community and can alienate the key influencers who are critical to engagement success. Strategies differ for remote, regional and urban communities as each face unique barriers to participation.

The fundamentals of engagement for Indigenous communities are the same as CALD to get quality outcomes. Frame your sport for their worldview, identify and work with key influencers (media and community leaders) to deliver a program of events and activities building both the capacity and trust required for long term sustained engagement.

Ralph: In my anecdotal experience many of the issues like getting involved, benefits, challenges and advice to coaches etc can be transposed across a number of marginalised groups such as CALD, Indigenous, people with disability and women. It is important though to work with people who are trusted in these groups to deliver programs so that they align culturally.

Linda: The Australian Sports Commission works with national sporting organisations to assist with developing more inclusive sport participation and development opportunities for underrepresented groups. Through this work, some common factors that affect the participation across all under-represented groups have been identified. The Australian Sports Commission is currently exploring these factors.

The Australian Sports Commission has planned a series of three webinars on Indigenous sport which will further discuss these common factors and also delve into the unique features of work in the Indigenous area. This series is scheduled to commence on 5th July 2012. Please visit our website closer to the time for more information and to register –

www.ausport.gov.au