

# Inclusive Language for Internal and External Communications

(Print, Digital and Verbal)

Whether your message is printed, tweeted, emailed, blogged or spoken, follow these guidelines to make sure your words resonate and connect with your intended audience. Inclusive language speaks to everyone!

- 1. Choose universal terms:** use terms and examples that are universal or that reflect a wide range of realities (e.g. Use “parent or guardian” instead of “mother and father”; use “staffing the table” instead of “manning the table”).
- 2. Choose terms that fully value people:** avoid terms that stereotype or diminish or that are based on a socially constructed gender/sex binary (e.g. Use “athletes” or “volunteers” depending on the context instead of “ladies and gentlemen”. Avoid referring to children and especially to adults as “girls” or “boys”).
- 3. Use people-first language:** recognize the person instead of defining someone by a single characteristic (e.g. Use “Directors” instead of “the Muslim Directors”. Use “coach” instead of “female coach”). If a characteristic is required and relevant then refer to it as a characteristic rather than defining the person by it (e.g. “the Directors on the Board who are Muslim”; the “coach who is female”).
- 4. Use the term(s) preferred by the person or group:** respect and use the term(s) preferred by the individual or group of that identity (e.g. People of Indigenous descent may prefer Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Native or something completely different). Ask and learn.
- 5. Use inclusive examples:** ensure that examples given are as inclusive as possible (e.g. choose names that reflect a variety of ethnicities, faiths and genders, like Fatima, Xiaoping and Suzanne).
- 6. Say individual’s names properly:** correctly pronouncing an individual’s name is a sign of respect. There are websites where you can hear the proper pronunciation of people’s names (e.g. check sites like [www.hearnames.com](http://www.hearnames.com)). Listen, repeat, practice out loud.
- 7. Be an ally:** speak up when people use devaluing or discriminatory expressions and terms. Help and support them to use inclusive language too.

## Respectful



## People-First



Reflect  
Widest Variety  
of Identities  
Possible



# Steps to Diversifying Our Athletes and Volunteers

**It's time to reach out to a variety of cultural groups in your community and highlight their opportunities in the Special Olympics (SO) movement. Who lives in your region? How can you connect with them? They may be your next athletes and volunteers!**

1. Find out who lives in your region from an ethnic origin, visible minority and religious standpoint by checking Statistics Canada data. Then set recruitment goals for the group(s) you will target (e.g. increase representation by athletes from South Asian backgrounds by x% or recruit # in the next year).
2. Now how do you connect and get individuals from the cultural group to commit to being athletes or volunteers in the SO movement?
  - i. Reach out to key individuals who are well-respected in their cultural/religious community. They may be willing to champion involvement in SO, connect you with their network, as well as educate you on how intellectual disabilities are viewed within their community.
  - ii. Approach cultural, newcomer and/or religious organizations to create partnerships (e.g. partner with a Chinese cultural centre).
  - iii. Find out what sports are most played by the cultural group that you are trying to engage. See *"Sports for Growth"*. Ask about cultural sporting leagues.
  - iv. Tell prospective volunteers about the benefits of volunteering like gaining transferable skills valued in the workplace, increasing social networks, improving language skills and giving back to the community.
  - v. And remember in some cultures and/or religions, having coaches who are female will open doors to girls getting involved. Provide accommodations to uniforms (where possible) that are culturally sensitive and safe.
3. Apply the *"Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Image Filter"* to SO materials to ensure the photos that you choose are sending a welcoming message,
4. Refer to *"Inclusive Language for Internal and External Communications"* and the *"Accessible Language for External Communications"* to make sure that your message is on target.




**Community**





Educate yourself  
about diversity  
and inclusion

Consult a  
Multifaith  
Calendar when  
planning events

5. When you are planning important events and programs, be sure to check a **Multifaith Calendar** (available online) so that there is no overlap with an important cultural or religious celebration (e.g. Kwanzaa, Ramadan, Diwali, Lunar New Year, etc.)
6. Recruit athletes and volunteers through approaches that:
  - i. Target a cross-section of society such as schools, CEGEPs, post-secondary job and volunteer fairs, health centres, sporting associations (e.g. provincial/territorial associations) and local community centres.
  - ii. Target a specific group through outreach to cultural/religious organizations and cultural/religious sporting leagues. When possible, ensure that one (or more) of the people recruiting is a member of that group.
7. Track progress towards the goals that you set (e.g. Consider putting optional fields on your registration forms where athletes and volunteers can provide you information about their cultural background so that you can track progress).
8. Once you've won them over and they've joined the SO community, you want to keep them. It's time for you to educate yourself about diversity and inclusion in general, and your own hidden bias specifically. This is how you create an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and able to fully participate and contribute.
9. Share diversity and inclusion best practices and lessons learned across Chapters.
10. For more information including the "*Strategy for Engaging Diverse Cultural Communities*", "*Sports of Possible Special Interest for Particular Communities: Chinese, Indian, Filipino and First Nations, Métis and Inuit Backgrounds*", "*Cultural Diversity & Inclusion Image Filter*", and "*Language Guidelines for Inclusion and Accessibility*" contact [info@specialolympics.ca](mailto:info@specialolympics.ca)



# Key Considerations for Engaging First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit Communities

## Meaningful relationships



Are you ready to explore partnering with First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit (FNMI) communities? Here are some suggestions that can help create a respectful journey and relationship. They are based on our experience, consultations and understanding and are not all encompassing.

### 1. Seek first to understand by learning about lack of trust toward people and organizations who are non-FNMI as a result of colonization, history and current day context including:

- Residential schools: forced placement of Indigenous children in boarding schools from 1880s to 1996 by the Canadian government
- “Sixties Scoop”: removal of FNMI children from their families and communities for placement in non-Native foster homes or families
- Massive overrepresentation of Indigenous children in foster care to this day
- 25% of children who are Status First Nations live in poverty

### 2. Recognize that building meaningful relationships based on trust will take years and genuine commitment.

- Find one Special Olympics (SO) rep who is willing to be the face of the organization and who will commit to making regular contact including face-to-face meetings. Be sure that the person has the interest and cultural skill set. Note a person who is FNMI-identified may be more trusted. A person who is white may be less trusted given the history above.
- Have the same SO rep try to take someone from the FNMI community when they visit.

### 3. Understand the specific culture(s) and learn about the individual community.

- Recognize the cultural differences between FNMI groups as well as between communities.
- Have a community member review your materials to recommend how they can be customized through wording, quotations, colours and symbols/images.
- Understand the way intellectual disabilities (IDs) are viewed, talked about, acknowledged, and how people with IDs may be welcomed.

### 4. Recruit Volunteers who are FNMI.

- Pick respected community leaders – both male and female.
- Have your community volunteers who are willing to speak on SO’s behalf do further outreach and establish connections (e.g. recruiting additional volunteers, visiting schools and day cares).
- Find coaches from the community.

## FNMI



First Nations, Indigenous, Native, Métis, Inuit: there are different terms used to identify individuals and communities. Ensure you are using terminology that the individuals/community prefer. Ask if you're not sure.



### 5. Create community partnerships.

- a. Create FNMI-specific programs and groups where all community members are welcome (e.g. SO Day on reserve, SO programming in schools).
- b. Offering food to participants is recommended from a cultural perspective.

For more information, please refer to the *"Strategy for Engaging First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) Communities"*, *"Sports of Possible Special Interest For Particular Communities: Chinese, Indian, Filipino, First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit Backgrounds"*, *"Inclusive and Accessible Language Guidelines"*, and the *"Strategy for Engaging with Diverse Cultural Communities"* by contacting [info@specialolympics.ca](mailto:info@specialolympics.ca)



**"You have to knock on the door many times to have it open. Success is when it opens and you are invited in. The next step is to be asked to sit at the table."**

*-Tom Fahie, Special Olympics Nova Scotia*

**Partnerships**



# Accessible Language for External Communications



It's time to get your message out so that all can understand it! Follow these guidelines so that your message can reach everyone. **"Accessible Language" is language everyone can understand!**

To begin, remember that **"everyone"** includes people with different education and literacy levels, some learning disabilities, and people for whom the language you are using isn't their first, most familiar language.

**So, as you create your message:**

- 1. Make your ideas clear:** bold key points, use headings with large, simple fonts, include white space to reduce clutter and confusion.
- 2. Connect simple visuals** (pictures, illustrations, symbols, graphics) **with relevant words** that add meaning to them.
- 3. Choose visuals that mirror your intended audience or a wide range of society.** Use the Special Olympics Canada Cultural Diversity & Inclusion Image Filter to guide your image choice.
- 4. Choose simple words with clear, single meanings** (e.g. use "list of volunteers" not "pool or bank of volunteers").
- 5. Keep sentences short and simple** (vs "When writing sentences, keep them brief and uncomplicated by avoiding complex sentence structures and multi-syllabic words." The first sentence of this paragraph in bold can be understood by someone with a Grade 5 reading level vs the second more complex sentence in quotation marks that conveys a similar message but requires higher than a Grade 12 level in reading). **You can find out the grade level (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level) of your specific text by checking the "readability stats" in Word or at [www.readabilityformulas.com](http://www.readabilityformulas.com). The lower the grade level of your text, the more people who will be able to understand your message.**
- 6. Remember your Second Language Learners and translate** your writing into your audience's first language (even the title translated is better than nothing if translation costs are prohibitive).
- 7. Check your written message with an "expert":** have someone from your intended audience or cultural group review your words, symbols, colours and terms. You want to be culturally "with it"!
- 8. Check your spoken message with an "expert" from the intended audience, and enlist one to interpret in the language most will understand at events.** Investigate free or volunteer interpreters. Ensure confidentiality.
- 9. Get the word out!** Use paper copies, in-person promotion, and telephone contacts as well as on-line options and email to communicate with your audience. Not everyone has easy access to computers or knows how to use them.

For more information, please refer to the source document, *"Inclusive and Accessible Language Guidelines"*, by contacting [info@specialolympics.ca](mailto:info@specialolympics.ca)

**Make your message accessible to your audience, and understood by everyone in it!**



# The Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Image Filter



## What is the Cultural Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Image Filter?

- A tool to help you choose images that reflect the diversity within Special Olympics (SO) and show commitment to include and welcome everyone interested in the SO movement.

## What does the Filter do?

- This Filter will help you pick images that provide a positive message of D&I. Often we unintentionally make certain groups very visible and other groups invisible through our choice of images. This tool can help you choose images that positively portray athletes and volunteers from many cultures and religions. Regularly use this tool to ensure that a diverse cross-section of identities is represented in your images.

## How to Use the Cultural D&I Image Filter

### Steps

1. Choose one image you are considering using.
2. Record 1 point for each “Yes” answer on the Score Card.
3. Use the Scoring System at the end to interpret the score.



**Pick images that provide a positive message**

| Score Card   | Points (Yes = 1) |
|--|------------------|
| <b>1. Identity: Cultural Aspects of Diversity</b>  |                  |
| <b>a.</b> One or more people who appear to be from an Indigenous background (i.e. Indigenous peoples: persons who are First Nations Métis and/or Inuit).   |                  |
| <b>b.</b> One or more people who appear to be from a visible minority (i.e. Visible Minorities: persons, other than Indigenous peoples, who are non-white in colour).  |                  |
| <b>c.</b> One or more people who appear to be from a Non-Christian Background based on visible items (e.g. hijabs, turbans, and/or other symbols associated with faiths other than Christianity).  |                  |
| <b>2. Portrayal of Success</b><br>One or more people who appear to be from a visible minority, Indigenous, or non-Christian background succeeding or engaged in a celebratory gesture (e.g. performing well, scoring, winning, giving a high five).          |                  |
| <b>3. Physical Position</b><br>One or more people who appear to be from visible minority, Indigenous, or non-Christian backgrounds in physical positions of power and strength (e.g. in the forefront, centrally placed, raised on the shoulders of others). |                  |
| <b>4. Person in Authority</b><br>One or more people perceived to be in authority (e.g. coach, official, volunteer, board member, staff member, person awarding medals) who appear to be from a visible minority, Indigenous and/or non-Christian background. |                  |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>5. Other Aspects of Diversity</b>  |  |
| a. 50% or more female representation.   |  |
| b. Multiple visible minority groups together, or individual(s) from a visible minority group(s) with a person(s) who appears to be white.               |  |
| c. Additional aspects of diversity (e.g. varied or underrepresented ages, visible physical disability, varied body shapes and sizes, multiple genders). |  |
| <b>Score (1 point for each "Yes" answer)</b>  |  |

### Scoring System

**5-9 Points:** Very strong D&I message.

**4 Points:** Strong D&I message.

**3 Points:** Weak D&I message. Get a second opinion, preferably from an individual(s) with the identity(s) depicted or intended audience.

**0-2 Points:** Very weak D&I message.

**Be sure that your intended audience can see themselves reflected in the material**

### Important Considerations

- The scoring is based on the assumption that there are no indications of disrespect in the image that you scored (e.g. inappropriate clothing, gestures, actions, accessories).
- If you are only using one image (e.g. cover image for Annual Report), make sure it scores at least one point on questions 1, 2 and/or 3.
- Be sure that your intended audience can see themselves reflected in the material.
- If you are using many images (e.g. brochure, office wall photos, rotating web page images), look at them together and be sure the overall impression is supportive of D&I.
- The higher the score, the stronger the message of cultural diversity and inclusion.

For more information, please refer to the source document, "Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Image Filter", by contacting [info@specialolympics.ca](mailto:info@specialolympics.ca)





# How To Diversify Your Board of Directors



## Why create a Board of Directors that is diverse and inclusive?

- To lead by example in showing commitment to diversity & inclusion.
- To reflect the changing demographics of Canada.
- To gain new and relevant insight.
- To connect to different communities of prospective athletes, volunteers and donors.

The following steps focus on increasing representation by individuals who identify as female, a visible minority, and/or First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit (FNMI).

1. Decide which group(s) you want to increase representation of on the Board (e.g. women, visible minorities and/or FNMI).
  - If you plan to recruit candidates with FNMI backgrounds, then FNMI Cultural Sensitivity training is recommended.
2. Articulate why you want that group(s).
3. Adopt a Board Diversity Policy. This will help ensure that Board diversity is an ongoing and organizationally identified priority rather than being a passing trend or subject to the inclination of the Chair and recruitment task force.
4. Modify the Recruitment Framework and Process to identify diversity criteria and to ensure that the process supports recruiting and nominating diverse candidates (the Canadian Board Diversity Council has recommended approaches).
5. Have the Board Chair agree to be a gatekeeper of inclusion (i.e. that everyone's voice is heard and respected even when it is a dissenting opinion). Intercultural coaching may be necessary if the Chair does not already have this skill and mindset.
6. Have Board Members be champions of inclusion ensuring that every individual feels welcomed, valued, mentored and has an opportunity to have their voice genuinely heard and supported at the Board table including when there is a dissenting opinion or a different perspective or reality. This may require training on hidden bias for Board members.
7. Keep track of the identities (e.g. gender, visible minority, FNMI) represented by Board Members and/or create a Board Matrix.
8. Increase the talent pool that you're recruiting from. One easy way to do this is via organizations dedicated to assisting with Board diversification:
  - i. Canadian Board Diversity Council (CBDC)  
[www.boarddiversity.ca](http://www.boarddiversity.ca)
  - ii. The Directors College  
[www.thedirectorscollege.com](http://www.thedirectorscollege.com)
  - iii. DiverseCity onboard, Maytree (Toronto-based organization with relevant resources/ research) [www.diversecityonboard.ca](http://www.diversecityonboard.ca)

Diverse

Inclusive



9. Take advantage of networking opportunities to reach the intended group(s).
  - i. Women's Executive Network (WXN) [www.wxnetwork.com](http://www.wxnetwork.com)
  - ii. Reach out through FNMI networks for prospective candidates.
  - iii. Recruit through Chapter initiatives that are accessing diverse cultural and FNMI networks.
  - iv. Create alliances with Employee Resource Groups in the private and public sector.
10. Establish a database of future prospective board members.
11. Establish Mentoring: Traditional, Reverse and/or Reciprocal Mentoring.

Mentoring allows for the flow of information to enhance understanding between mentor and mentee. It permits off the record Q&A, and encourages an amicable relationship. The pairings can be based on Board experience or other criteria.

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### Traditional Mentoring

Willing, experienced Board members are paired as mentors with new Board members (mentees).

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### Reverse Mentoring

In the context of creating a diverse and inclusive Board, Board members who are from underrepresented groups (e.g. female, FMNI, visible minorities) are paired as mentors with Board members (mentees) from the dominant group (e.g. white, male) to allow the latter to better understand different worldviews and perspectives.

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### Reciprocal Mentoring

In reciprocal mentoring, both traditional and reverse mentoring occur in the same pairing with a two-way flow of information.

### The Rule of 3

When possible, it is recommended that three or more people with a particular identity (e.g. female, visible minority, FNMI) join the Board to help create a Board environment that is welcoming and inclusive where all members feel they can speak comfortably and be understood.

For more information, please refer to the "SOC Board Diversification Strategy" by contacting [info@specialolympics.ca](mailto:info@specialolympics.ca)



Increase  
the talent  
pool you're  
recruiting  
from



# Sports for Growth



Are you interested in attracting new athletes and volunteers from diverse cultural and/or First Nations Métis or Inuit Backgrounds? Then here are some sports that may help you do that based on the most popular sports from Canada's top 3 source countries for immigration as well as sports that are played at the North American Indigenous Games.

If you're doing outreach to one of the cultural communities listed, consider profiling one or more of the sports below.

| Top 3 Source Countries for Immigration to Canada (2004-2013) <sup>1</sup> | Growth Rate <sup>2</sup>                    | Percentage Growth (2006-2011) |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. People's Republic of China   | Canadian Aboriginal <sup>3</sup> Population | 20.1%                         |
| 2. India  |   |                               |
| 3. Philippines  | Non-Aboriginal Population                   | 5.2%                          |

| Most Popular Sports of Special Olympics China |              |  |
|---|--------------|--|
| Rank  | Sport        | Sport of Special Olympics Canada and/or Special Olympics International |
| 1.  | Athletics    | SOC & SOI  |
| 2.  | Table Tennis | SOI  |
| 3.  | Basketball   | SOC & SOI  |
| 4.  | Soccer       | SOC & SOI  |
| 5.  | Badminton    | SOI  |

Other SOC sports played in SO China: aquatics, bocce, bowling, powerlifting, artistic gymnastics, snowshoeing, floor hockey, speed skating, softball, golf, cross-country skiing, figure skating and alpine skiing.

| Most Popular Sports of Special Olympics India (Bharat) |                      |  |
|--|----------------------|--|
| Rank   | Sport                | Sport of Special Olympics Canada (SOC) and/or Special Olympics International (SOI) |
| 1.   | Athletics            | SOC & SOI  |
| 2.   | Bocce                | SOC & SOI  |
| 3.   | Cricket              |  |
| 4.   | Soccer               | SOC & SOI  |
| 5.   | Kabaddi <sup>4</sup> |  |

Other SOC sports played in SO India: basketball, floor hockey, aquatics, softball, powerlifting, snow shoeing, alpine skiing, figure skating, speed skating and golf.

Did you know that 2 sources fueling population growth in Canada are immigration and a high growth rate among Canada's Indigenous population?



Top 3 Source Countries for Immigration to Canada: People's Republic of China, India and the Philippines



### Most Popular Sports of Special Olympics Philippines

| Rank | Sport      | Sport of Special Olympics Canada and/or Special Olympics International |
|------|------------|--|
| 1.   | Athletics  | SOC & SOI  |
| 2.   | Bocce      | SOC & SOI  |
| 3.   | Bowling    | SOC & SOI  |
| 4.   | Basketball | SOC & SOI  |
| 5.   | Soccer     | SOC & SOI  |

Other SOC sports played in SO Philippines: aquatics, rhythmic gymnastics and powerlifting.

### Sports at the North American Indigenous Games 2017

| Sport      | Sport of Special Olympics Canada and/or Special Olympics International |
|------------|--|
| Archery    | Prohibited Sport - SOI General Rules Section 7.04(i)                   |
| Athletics  | SOC & SOI  |
| Badminton  |  |
| Baseball   | Softball – SOC & SOI   |
| Basketball | SOC & SOI  |
| Canoeing   |  |
| Golf       | SOC & SOI  |
| Kayaking   |  |
| Lacrosse   |  |
| Riflery    | Prohibited Sport - SOI General Rules Section 7.04(i)                   |
| Soccer     | SOC & SOI  |
| Softball   | SOC & SOI  |
| Swimming   | SOC & SOI  |
| Volleyball | SOI  |
| Wrestling  | Prohibited Sport - SOI General Rules Section 7.04(i)                   |

Canada's Indigenous population is growing almost four times faster than the non-Indigenous population

For more information, please refer to the source document, "*Sports of Possible Special Interest For Particular Communities: Chinese, Indian, Filipino and First Nations, Métis and/or Inuit Backgrounds*", by contacting [info@specialolympics.ca](mailto:info@specialolympics.ca)

<sup>1</sup>Source: Statistics Canada, Facts and figures, 2013 – Immigration overview: Permanent Residents, Canada – Permanent residents by source country, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/10.asp>

<sup>2</sup>Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey (NHS). <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

<sup>3</sup>The Aboriginal peoples of Canada, as defined by the Constitution Act, 1982, comprise the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

<sup>4</sup>"Kabaddi is a contact sport that originated in Ancient India. Kabaddi is an umbrella term that encompasses various forms of the game."

