

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



"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

