Coaching Association of Canada Anti-Racism in Sport Coaching Report

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Introduction

To make sport more equitable, anti-racism in coaching is a priority. Joseph, McKenzie & Brown (2021a) clarify that there is much work to be done, particularly in the Canadian context. Hence, the objective of this report is not to formulate instructions to 'solve' racism. Instead, this report will highlight areas of growth for all coaches in sport to recognize the ongoing effects of colonialism, consider how whiteness operates, understand how to mitigate inequalities, and acknowledge methods of advancing racial equity and inclusivity in Canadian sport. There are many types of racial discrimination (e.g., treatment vs. access) and barriers affecting racialized coaches and athletes. The Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) will advance anti-racism in sport – that is, critical reflection on and change to the systems of oppression that continue to impact racialized coaches and practices of coaching racialized athletes. To do so, it will be crucial to leverage the local knowledges of Indigenous and other communities as well as critical race theories (CRT) to learn about experiences of discrimination and promote ideas for anti-racist transformation.

Report Overview

The following report will define key terms, including race, racism, and whiteness, and demonstrate how they are founded within colonialism. Next, we discuss Critical Race Theory (CRT), which provides a framework to explore how systems of oppression, like racism and whiteness, continue to impact racialized athletes and coaches in Canada. We outline evidence-based recommendations for anti-racism e-learning coming straight from coaches working in sport organizations in Canada. Before concluding, we spotlight incorporating Indigenous-focused and decolonial practices into mainstream sport in Canada.

Racism & Whiteness: Two Sides of the Anti-racism Coin

There are two main ideological frameworks to understand racism: individual behaviour and institutional power (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Doane, 2006; Lentin, 2016). The ideology of individual racism suggests that racism results from behaviors, overt acts of discrimination against another person or group of people based on skin colour (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Doane, 2006; Lentin, 2016). On one hand, individual racism is also subtle and sometimes unconscious microaggressions, daily "verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (Sue, 2010, p. 3). This narrow understanding of racism as individual leads to perceptions of racism as an issue of the past, irrelevant to a multicultural and inclusive society today, or one that could be eradicated by eliminating 'bad people'. On the other hand, understanding racism as an institutional power encompasses the ongoing processes, policies, and daily practices within social, political, and economic institutions that maintain and exacerbate inequalities in power, resources, and opportunities for racial, ethnic, cultural and religious groups in society (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Doane, 2006; Lentin, 2016). This broader notion suggests that it is not only the explicit and discriminatory actions at an individual level, but also the more covert and pervasive processes enacted by individuals throughout different societal institutions, such as sport, that continue to oppress racialized groups.

The concepts of race and racism must be situated within their historical and economic roots to understand where these processes originated and how they are (re)produced and maintained. The concept of race is not inherent to our social world. Rather, it developed from colonial processes. Racial classifications were first used by European settlers, scientists, and educators as a method of prescribing superiority and value to people based on whether they did or did not fit the normative European understandings of a person deserving of rights (Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018;; Joseph & Kriger, 2021; Thobani, 2007). Those who did not fit into the superior White, European, non-disabled category were seen as dispensable or useful only in service to economic interests of settling the land. For example, territory expansion, agricultural production, and business development required Indigenous dispossession and genocide combined with Black, Asian and other immigrant labour exploitation. Thus, racism as a process of subjugation and marginalization of types of people was inherently part of the process of colonialization and the creation of what we now call Canada. Racism not only penetrated the biological understandings of personhood, but also the intellectual, emotional, and moral values assigned to people (that is, White individuals) and those considered otherwise. In Canada, this has been continuously reproduced in the displacement and violence enacted against Indigenous and Black communities and countless iterations of immigration policies that narrowly define and restrict who is Canadian (Hogarth & Fletcher, 2018; Mackey, 2002; Thobani, 2007). In sport, the legacy of colonial exclusions is evident in belated inclusion and restrictions placed on Indigenous, Black, and other racialized athletes, women, people with disabilities, those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and others previously defined as non-people.

Whiteness is a theoretical framework that helps to understand the underlying cause for racism and colonial projects. Not to be mistaken for the racial category, White, whiteness is the all-encompassing systemic processes and actions that work to sustain and reproduce unequal relationships of power and privilege between White and non-white individuals. Whiteness is a system that normalized the ideal, dominant, and universal way of living, thinking, doing and being and is (re)constructed in politics, education, the economy, and interpersonal spaces (Garner, 2007; Levine-Rasky, 2013; Shome, 2000;

Thobani, 2007), resulting in unearned privileges for White people. When Whiteness is confronted, people can feel discomfort and defensive, a phenomenon DiAngelo (2018) refers to as 'white fragility,' which works to maintain the power of whiteness as a set of systemic processes (Garner, 2007; Shome, 2000) because the focus shifts away from rectifying inequalities and towards how individual White people haven't done anything 'wrong'. Rather than focus on individuals, coaches must attend to the systems in which they are embedded and complicit, in order to make change.

To challenge the omnipresent nature of whiteness, we can utilize Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework. CRT helps to understand not only how whiteness operates and is maintained in sport and coaching, but also provides anti-racism tools for challenging these processes (Hylton, 2010; Lynn et al., 2013; McDonald, 2009). By centering racism as a fact of contemporary Canadian society, CRT challenges dominant understandings of racism as something from the past, and focuses on listening to the voices of racialized individuals to deeply understand their experiences, all of which serve to uncover the inequalities purposefully hidden by whiteness (Lynn et al., 2013; McDonald, 2009). For example, narratives of meritocracy, that is, hiring the 'most qualified' coach hide the ways whiteness operates: qualifications are coded in terms that advantage university educated, middle and upper class men who are White (Rankin-Wright & Hylton, 2020). In coaching, racism and the underlying processes of Whiteness can be seen in the privileging of White coaches and administrators for positions within sport organizations (Bradbury, 2013; Fletcher & Hylton, 2016; Kilvington, 2019), the exclusion of Indigenous coaches (Apoifis et al., 2018), the ignoring or downplaying of experiences of racism (Hylton, 2018; Joseph et al., 2021), and the overburdening of racialized coaches, administrators, and athletes to do unpaid work on issues of inequality (Joseph et al., 2021), are all ways in which racism and Whiteness are manifested and maintained. In these examples, Whiteness is continuously centered and understood as the dominant and normative way of thinking and doing, but in applying CRT, embracing discomforts, and challenging the ways that racism and Whiteness are perpetuated, we can break down the systems of oppression and inequality that racialized coaches and athletes face.

Equity Training and Coaching Intersectionality

Current offerings for equity training do little to address the intersectional barriers coaches and athletes face related to race. The absence of discrimination and prejudice is commonly associated with effective coaching in Parasport (Alexander et al., 2020), but little attention has been paid to the particular experiences of racialized para athletes. Equity training on gender similarly often takes a singular axis approach and has been quite effective in increasing opportunities of White women coaches in sport in Canada. To increase the effectiveness of training, coaches must increase understandings of different systems of oppression, such as racism, and how it intersects with sexism, ableism, and homophobia, in coaching day-to-day work.

Some education modules currently available to coaches have a strong emphasis on creating opportunities for coaches to interact with content more fully. Canadian Women in Sport offers a training module on gender equity and outlines how to "EAT your learning" (Canadian Women and Sport, n.d.). "EAT" is an acronym for Extend, Apply, and Transform. The aim is to extend current knowledge by seeking out learning opportunities, apply learning by sharing with others and implementing it in daily life, and transform perspectives by considering and embracing others. The goal of this is to take the knowledge learned from within and outside the module and develop a deeper understanding and

embodiment that allows for ongoing learning and unlearning (Canadian Women and Sport, n.d.). This perspective should be applied to anti-racism training.

A similar resource from Viasport British Columbia on inclusion for LGBTQI2S in sport offers practical recommendations for coaches to apply with their peers and athletes. This resource emphasizes challenging stereotypes and assumptions and being a leader in modelling how to create and maintain a culture in sport that is safe and welcoming for everyone. The five principles outlined by the resource are Respect, Safety, Leadership, Fairness, and Privacy, with each associated to actions coaches can take in their program, with their peers, and with their organization to help build a safer and more inclusive environment for athletes and coaches alike (ViaSport British Columbia, n.d.). If these principles can be action oriented, they will be a great anti-racism resource.

Using a CRT framework demands training using an intersectional lens. A tool created by Kriger et al. (2021) helps to operationalize intersectionality through identifying four areas to apply intersectionality in sport work. These include Learning, Harm Reduction, Accountability and Transparency, and Transformation (see Figure 1). Using this framework, coaches can ask the question, "Who is centred?" to reflect on who is prioritized and marginalized within the sport, and apply the actions and commitments to their practice (Kriger et al., 2021). Attention to forms of prejudice racialized people face such as islamophobia, homophobia, and ableism shift 'who is centred.' Hence, it is "imperative to go beyond essentialism in recognizing fluid, multiple and intersecting identities as part of Canada's multiversal hyperdiverse realities" (Guo & Guo, 2021, pp. 205-206). Note, when we center racial inclusion, we may not be able to immediately shift entire racist cultures or hire for racial diversity across all previously marginalized groups. The wheel metaphor of the tool invites us to consider small actions that will 'move' coaching toward better practices of racial equity.
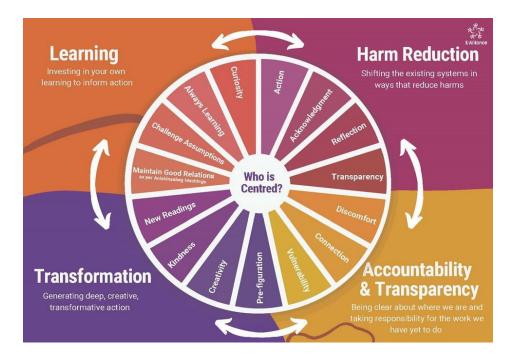

Figure 1. Operationalizing Intersectionality Framework

Support and Networking: Foundations for Anti-racist Career Advancement for Coaches

Much of the current literature on racial inequality in coaching, and especially the experiences of racialized women, highlight support as an important consideration for e-learning about recruiting and retaining racialized coaches. Coaches can actively create structural and professional supports for their peers and speak out against discrimination, negative stereotypes, and inequitable practices they witness. Mentorship is a form of support that can be driven by community, provincial, national, and educational athletic department personnel, and more development programs could be offered, particularly for young racialized women seeking to enter the coaching profession (Borland & Bruening, 2010; Joseph & McKenzie, 2021). Further, advocating for more inclusive, transparent, and fair policies, hiring practices, and promotion processes within their organization can help to support racialized coaches. If we accept that racism exists, we must create supports such as mental health resources for racialized coaches, that is, access to anti-racism awareness and, if possible, racialized mental health professionals who can support racialized coaches to understand their experiences and their options.

Networking is a means to redress the idea that coaching has an "inner circle or 'Old Boys Club'" (CAC, 2020, p. 7), a profession exclusively open to cis-gendered, White men, leaving other groups on the margins, fighting to get in. To combat this, coaches can find ways to sponsor members from other underrepresented groups, inviting them into formal and informal coaching networks, relationships with decision-makers, and knowledge sharing circles to help them advance in professional spaces. In doing so, it is important to not only help racialized coaches (and athletes aspiring to coach) enter these spaces, but also to make them feel a sense of welcome and belonging by interrupting offensive jokes and holding themselves and others accountable for fostering a safe space.

Potential Resource:

Coaching for Equity: Conversations That Change Practice
by Elena Aguilar
Coaching for Equity covers critical topics in the larger conversation about racial equity, and helps readers develop the knowledge, dispositions, and skills to be able to:
- Talk productively about race,
- Build trust to support vulnerability,
- Unpack mental models and change someone's mind,
- Observe classrooms [sports teams] and collect data to support equitable outcomes,
- Inspire others and deepen commitment,
- Evaluate and celebrate growth.

This work is set in the education space, but is applicable to sport as coaches are educators and can develop promising practices to get past fragility to meet the needs of *all* learners [athletes].

Education Recommendations: Straight from Sport Stakeholders

Coaches need to learn about systems of oppression within coaching, and actions that serve to maintain or challenge these systems. Researchers such as Bradbury et al. (2018) and Rankin-Wright and Hylton (2020) have been proponents of anti-racist education that is action oriented, focused on how whiteness operates, what institutional racism looks like, and what impacts racism has on different racialized communities, while also focusing on the benefits of a culturally diverse coaching workforce.

In Canadian sport, Joseph and colleagues (2021) offer rich recommendations coming directly from sport stakeholders. Through an anti-racist and decolonial lens, their research examined the sporting experiences of coaches in Canada, specifically in Ontario University Athletics (OUA), with an objective of formulating actionable plans that support an anti-racist agenda across the province. A common recommendation put forth by multiple OUA members was a call for anti-racist education, echoing findings from the recent Diversity in Coaching Report (CAC, 2020). Coaches note it is important to continuously learn about how discrimination and inequality are perpetuated within sport and how this limits the recruitment and retention of underrepresented athletes and coaches. Organizational workshops based on anti-racism must centre a justice orientation, be "mandatory, and taught by experts" (Joseph et al., 2021, p. 42) for athletes, coaches, coach educators, or leaders. Education should be ongoing, challenging, and "requires moving through discomfort," (Joseph et al., 2021, p. 4) – this should not stop coaches from pursuing learning opportunities. Rather, discomfort is a sign of unlearning whiteness and other privileges of colonialism and is a precursor to change.

A common recommendation requested by non-racialized coaches was, "to increase their own awareness and understanding in order to be more supportive coaches" (CAC, 2020, p. 5). They also expressed wanting to: "(1) learn how to deal with language barriers, particularly with parents; (2) learn different communication styles to communicate effectively; (3) undergo cultural sensitivity and unconscious bias training; and (4) develop an understanding of cultures and diversity to avoid doing or saying the wrong thing and to be respectful of specific circumstances such as coaching during Ramadan" (p. 5). Coaches also identified areas of need such as understanding unconscious biases, anti-oppression, and a wide range of types of racism, including but not limited to anti-Asian, anti-Black, anti-Latinx, and anti-Indigenous racism, as well as anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia. The following highlights other e-learning priorities recommended directly by Canadian coaches:

Variety/intersectionality

Sport organizations can administer education through a myriad of ways, including "in-person and virtual training, workshops, online quizzes, social media videos, town hall sessions, and healing circles" (Joseph et al., 2021, p. 42). This suggests that e-learning should point coaches to opportunities to implement training with a wide array of audiences—including older coaches or those in more rural regions. In order for anti-racist education to be successful, "strategies must be put in place to advance community buy-in … and education must not repeat the same information/format year after year" (Joseph et al., 2021, p. 42), but should allow for deep engagement over time. Moreover, anti-racism education must harmonize with other training. Across coach training on equity in Canada today, current offerings do little to address the intersectionality of coaches and athletes. Understanding the ways racism intersects with homophobia, ableism, and sexism requires anti-racism-focused training in addition to harmonizing anti-racism

education within other established and embedded coaching educational initiatives. Addressing racism across existing training would signal that coaches comprehend the importance and intertwined nature of equity issues.

Case Studies

Racism can be subtle and secretive. It can be obvious, overt, individual, or systemic. That is why education must cover the many ways racism manifests itself in sport and society through case studies covering the complexities of real racist incidents or structural issues that coworkers and teammates can work on together (CAC, 2020), followed by an expert-led debrief to build trust and enhance anti-racism knowledge in the process (Joseph et al., 2021). Some administrators advocated for hearing directly from those who have experienced racism to spur change (CAC, 2020; Joseph et al., 2021). However, putting the responsibility "on the most vulnerable in an organization to share their pain has been found to be an ineffective singular strategy to making significant change" (Joseph et al., 2021, p. 42). Change requires re-enactment of real-life scenarios that document how individual behaviours, institutional practices, and policies impact coaches and the racialized athletes they support, and, importantly, what to do differently.

Racial Slurs and Remarks

Several Canadian coaches have detailed their past and present experiences with racially charged comments that have forced them to develop, "tough skin to shrug it off in the moment" (CAC, 2020, p. 5). Still, this "tough skin" does not insulate them from the emotional and psychological harm caused by racial slurs and remarks. Furthermore, many coaches were once athletes who dealt with these issues, making them empathetic and understanding of the experiences of their own racialized players. One coach felt that "When you are a visible minority coach, racial slurs toward your players effect [sic] you more" (CAC, 2020, p. 5). In accordance with stakeholder suggestions, case studies regarding racist slurs (in music), tropes, microaggressions, stereotypes, and remarks should be strongly considered in anti-racism education. All sport stakeholders in Canada must be made aware of the detrimental effects words can have on racialized communities, whether on mental and physical health (McKenzie, 2020), or on overall sport performance.

Not Seeing Past Race: Individual Racism

Coaches in Canada have shared their experiences encountering people who assume that based on their skin colour or nationality, they are not the head coach, are not qualified to coach, or are better suited to coach a particular sport (e.g., Asian Chinese badminton coach; CAC, 2020; Joseph et al., 2021). If coaches fall outside of these stereotypes, they must work that much harder to "prove themselves"; this is especially true for racialized women coaches (CAC, 2020). Joseph and colleagues note that racialized coaches live with the spectre of being fired (2021, p. 30): "You don't get to make the same mistakes that white coaches make by dealing with the players, or slacking, or losing. They're going to find a way to fire you, so you gotta tow the line. That's the way that a regular Black person functions." Hence, another component to consider for case studies is, the implications of not seeing past race for racialized coaches and athletes.

Not Seeing Race: Racial Evasiveness

Racial evasiveness can be harmful to coaches, as well as to their athletes. Athletes have stated that education should teach about, "microaggressions … what diversity is, and just like what other cultures are … and embracing that, instead of like what I said before: color blindness. Like people saying, 'Oh I

don't see colour!'" (Joseph et al., 2021, p. 46). Coaches "seeing" colour must be related to validating and acknowledging the racism being endured and valuing the eradication of existing inequitable systems (Joseph et al., 2021). Microaggressions, including subtle insults, 'jokes,' and assumptions about an individual's characteristics based on race (e.g., physical strength, mental toughness, ability to dance, neighbourhood or ancestral place of origin) must be confronted. The fact that the comment may be funny to some, only unconsciously racist, or not explicitly about race is inconsequential. When athletes or other coaches complain about or disclose microaggressions they have experienced, coaches should take time to listen, validate, understand, and work together to problem solve. Incorporating microaggressions and knowledge about racial evasiveness into anti-racism education will create long-lasting change for all stakeholders in sport.

Systemic Racism in Sport: Past, Present, Future

Many non-racialized Canadian coaches in the CAC (2020) report discussed having a limited understanding of issues surrounding systemic racism in Canadian sport, its historical antecedents, current implications, and the potential future impacts it currently has on racialized athletes and coaches. Moreover, they are also concerned that individuals who fail to value racial inclusivity and cultural diversity in sport potentially play a cancerous role in preventing anti-racist change. All coaches raised within sport in Canada, regardless of race, are likely to harbour some ideas that perpetuate systemic racism, including ideas that result in "being passed over for coaching positions" and "having to deal with negative comments/publicity" despite successful records and extensive resumes, and successful programs/services (CAC, 2020, p. 10). Anti-racist education should target *all* coaches and highlight the experiences of those who have been 'the only' in their sporting spaces (i.e., only Asian woman, only Indigenous man), and how they must disproportionately police what they say, how they say it, and their emotions just to advance in their careers. Moreover, anti-racist education should demonstrate unequivocally the ways that all of the systems of sport – coach human resources, player recruitment, facilities, communications, marketing, on-field activities, practices, games, tournaments, funding, policies etc. – can stifle racialized coaches' opportunities to "not only advance in coaching, but to change the landscape for their athletes and coaches they mentor" (CAC, 2020, p. 10). To combat this systemic racism, specific frameworks, such as the *Name, Own, Frame, and Sustain Framework* for addressing anti-Black racism (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021) drawn from education could be helpful to disrupt, confront, and challenge racism.

Changing the Narrative: Getting Comfortable Being Uncomfortable

Athletes in Canada emphasized that the absence of anti-racism training, tools, and resources for their coaches means an absence of awareness, especially for those with little personal exposure to racism or racial diversity (Joseph et al., 2021). For example, the absence of an anti-racism reporting tool/policy or organizational anti-racism expert means that coaches and athletes have nowhere to turn when a racist incident occurs. Some coaches may be under the impression that talking about what to do if racism occurs means the team has a problem. However, "[s]imilar to the shifting ideas about concussion and sexual harassment, public acknowledgement of 'hidden' racism will help" coaches to demonstrate a commitment to awareness of the problem, a duty of care to avoid the harms of racism, and a willingness to do something about it. Ninomiya et al. (2021, p. 6) suggest, based on research in Indigenous communities, that 'courageous conversations' about racism are what precede change. It should also be noted that these conversations, for example, holding others accountable for their racist words and 'jokes,' must be had among White coaches and with White athletes, who are more likely to have a limited understanding of how racism occurs, and more likely to be bystanders, perpetrators, interveners, or

decision-makers related to individual or institutional racism. In order to spark conversation around racism, and understand how to resist racism at the level of daily language, White allies must be willing to get uncomfortable and see themselves as part of the solution.

Indigenous-focused Practices into Mainstream Sport in Canada

How training is conducted is just as important as *what* content is covered (Ninomiya et al., 2021, p. 5). The "dump truck" approach to teaching (essentially dumping knowledge on learners) is neither appropriate nor effective for "educating people about complex topics that are both personal and deeply rooted in socially accepted views" (Ninomiya et al., 2021, p. 7). To mitigate passive, ineffective education, new approaches, such as the *San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training,* have been created for Anti-Indigenous racism education. The San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training is a unique, interactive program offered in an online environment that is rooted in CRT, transformative learning theory, critical decolonized anti-racism theory, and whiteness (Ninomiya et al., 2021, p. 8). As such, this approach is effective in creating culturally competent and sensitive anti-racism education programs, particularly for Indigenous communities in Canada.

Many Indigenous coaches have been indignant about the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities that are plagued by misconception and ignorance about Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing, living, and being (Marlin et al., 2020). Sporting organizations that commit to integrating Indigenous knowledges into their coaching will go a long way to shifting ideas about Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships. A key takeaway from Indigenous-focused research in Australian sport is that organizations must not only value self-identity, but also promote the self-narrative of Indigenous coaches and athletes. Doing so encourages optimal performance in athletes and coaches, makes them feel more included, more engaged, and more likely to pursue or continue in coaching (Apoifis et al., 2018).

In hopes of sparking transformational and systemic change, Rynne and colleagues (2019) envision a future, "when coaches can benefit from prolonged and ongoing education facilitated by qualified (ideally Indigenous) coach developers" (p. 267). To accomplish this, (1) critical reflexivity, and (2) primacy of local knowledge must be front of mind for coach development curricula. Critical reflexivity aims to challenge one's own self-identity, ideals, and values relative to the goals of the community worked with. Indigenous people from across Canada belong to more than 50 nations (Government of Canada, n.d.). Incorporating knowledge from specific local communities before committing to the start of any Indigenous anti-racism education is important to better inform approaches for coaches, coach educators, and decision-makers using formal (e.g., Indigenous councils) and informal (e.g., community groups, elders) knowledge keepers. Leveraging the expertise of community leaders during and after programing into well-informed, culturally competent and sensitive approaches that optimize Indigenous sport participation and coach development can empower and amplify the voices of local Indigenous communities that have been historically silenced (Äikäs & Salmi, 2019; Hogarth, 2019; Rynne et al., 2019), and help afterwards in evaluating the degree to which it achieved previously agreed upon goals. Doing so demonstrates that coach educators and developers value the input of the local communities they are working with, and are committed to long-lasting, sustainable change.

Conclusion

The gatekeepers maintaining the status quo in sport in Canada have left many racialized coaches "on the outside looking in" (CAC, 2020, p. 10). From microaggressions and racial slurs, to subtle and systemic practices (e.g., discriminatory hiring and recruitment), there are multiple ways racism reveals itself in sport. All coaches play an important role in shifting experiences for racialized athletes and for supporting their racialized colleagues. To this end, anti-racism education is of critical importance for the knowledge, skillset, and tools coaches need to ensure equitable and anti-oppressive approaches to sport in Canada. If sustainable change is the goal, then raising awareness through anti-racism education must equip and empower coaches to influence transformational anti-racist change to athlete recruitment, communications, hiring practices and every other activity they are involved in.

All sport institutions involve players and practitioners with multiple social identities and are increasingly reliant on the ever-growing Indigenous, newcomer, and racialized population to sustain them. Whether negative or positive news, word spreads fast in sport in Canada. If coaches are creating welcoming environments, incorporating anti-racism healing circles to enable open discussion among members, allowing for storytelling that strengthens self-identity and community ties, intervening when microaggressions occur, and promoting Indigenous teachings and knowledge in mainstream sport practices they will move towards creating anti-racist environments that are healthy for all.

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