

Aboriginal youth today face many barriers to leading active, healthy lives in their communities. They lack opportunities to pursue excellence in sports. There is little access to culturally relevant traditional sports activities that strengthen Aboriginal identity and instill a sense of pride and self-confidence. Lack of resources, sports facilities, and equipment limits their ability to play sports. Racism remains an issue. Aboriginal girls face the extra barrier of gender discrimination.²⁶⁰ Despite the many achievements of individual Indigenous athletes, too many Aboriginal youth remain excluded from community-based sports activities and the pursuit of excellence in sport. The *Physical Activity and Sport Act* (2003) set out the federal government's sport policy regarding the full and fair participation of all Canadians in sport, and mandated the minister to "facilitate the participation of under-represented groups in the Canadian sport system" (S. 5.m). However, the Act made no specific reference to Aboriginal peoples.²⁶¹

Call to Action

- 89) We call upon the federal government to amend the *Physical Activity and Sport Act* to support reconciliation by ensuring that policies to promote physical activity as a fundamental element of health and well-being, reduce barriers to sports participation, increase the pursuit of excellence in sport, and build capacity in the Canadian sport system, are inclusive of Aboriginal peoples.

In 2005, Sport Canada developed the Aboriginal Peoples' Participation in Sports Policy, which recognized the unique circumstances of Aboriginal peoples and the role of sport as a vehicle for individual and community health and cultural revitalization. It recognized that Aboriginal peoples have their own culturally diverse, traditional knowledge and cultural teachings of play, games, and sports.²⁶² However, no action plan was subsequently developed to implement the policy.²⁶³ In 2011, in preparation for revising the 2002 Canadian Sport Policy (CSP), Sport Canada conducted a series of consultations across the country, including a roundtable on "Sport and Aboriginal Peoples." The roundtable summary report noted:

Participants believe that the needs and issues of Aboriginal Peoples were not adequately reflected in the 2002 CSP.... The feeling among the participants was that the previous policy had "no teeth"... The new CSP should acknowledge the unique identity of Aboriginal Peoples, what Aboriginal Peoples can contribute to Canadian sport ... and make a clear commitment to action. The CSP can support sport for Aboriginal Peoples by reflecting Aboriginal culture and realities, cross-cultural issues between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples, and an understanding of the motivation behind the interest of Aboriginal Peoples in sport.... If the new policy doesn't reflect the needs and issues of Aboriginal sport, then it will not be relevant to the Aboriginal population.... It would be important to recognize that the barriers to sport extend beyond a lack of resources and gaps and weaknesses in the sport